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A GROAN OF TERROR BROKE FROM THE LIPS OF THE PIRATE CREW IN CHORUS AS
THE WIZARD PRIEST ENDED HIS CURSE.

OR,
The Sea Scouts of Seventy-Six.

**A Romance of Outlawing Ashore
and Afloat.**

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
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SCOUTS OF THE SEA," "MERLE, THE
MUTINEER," "CRETAN ROVER,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.
THE SILVER SHIP.

THERE was intense excitement in England, and also in the American Colonies of America, as what are now the United States were then known, for a treasure-ship had been lost, or rather had not appeared in the port of New York as had been the orders of the king to her commander.

The excitement was the more intense, on both sides of the Atlantic, from the fact that the "Silver Ship," as the craft was called, had been sighted at sea by scores of vessels, but would never answer a hail, and when chased by cruisers

The Silver Ship.

would spread her canvas and fly away, never failing to drop her pursuer out of sight, so wondrous was her speed.

The story of the Silver Ship was a strange one, for the king had learned, by the confession of a pirate whose life he had spared in return for the secret, where Morgan, the Buccaneer had buried upon an island in the Caribbean Sea a vast amount of silver, in boxes of Spanish pesos.

The pirate had said that there was a ship-load of it, and so the king had told him if his story was a true one he should receive his life, for he had been sentenced to the gallows, and a handsome sum of money.

The outlaw, with his crew, had been captured by a British cruiser, and so had the confession been wrung from the leader to save his life.

He had at once been taken to the scene of execution, to see his comrades die, and then his quarters had been changed and comforts allowed him until a vessel could be fitted out and was ready to dispatch to the treasure island.

The king had selected his most trusted young officer, Captain Sir St. George Maybrick, and given him special orders to select a picked crew, from quarter-deck to forecastle, for the cruise, and to take his own, the king's, yacht, a beautiful brig then building, and arm and equip her without regard to expense.

The brig had been named, by the king himself, the Wind Witch, and when she for the first time spread her white sails on her trial trip, his Majesty had been on board, and she did indeed prove to be a sea witch, for other fleet vessels ordered out with her, to test her speed, were left astern with the greatest of ease.

His Majesty was delighted, as was also her handsome young captain, St. George Maybrick.

The craft was the very one to send after the treasure, for no vessel afloat could catch her at sea, while she was stanch in a sea way and blow, and was armed with a splendid battery of ten guns, four of which were pivot pieces of large caliber.

The crew consisted of ten officers and one hundred picked men, and with the pirate captain on board, sent out in irons, but should his story of the silver treasure prove true, to return as the king's guest on the Wind Witch, the beautiful vessel set sail down the Thames for the far-away island in the Caribbean Sea.

A number of vessels escorted her to sea, with many wishes of good-luck, but they were soon dropped far astern, and the Wind Witch before long was a white dot upon the blue horizon.

The orders from the king to Captain St. George Maybrick were, after getting the treasure, to return via the port of New York, and there leave, in the hands of the king's treasurer for the Colonies, one-half the amount of silver obtained, and the balance he was to bring on to London and deposit in the palace vaults, for this was his Majesty's own speculation, and he expected to enrich himself by the expedition, as well as to pay certain pressing debts due in America.

As the time passed when the "Silver Ship," as the Wind Witch was called, should have appeared in the port of New York, excitement ran high, and this was also the case in London about the time news was expected of her arrival in America.

But days went by, and weeks also, and no news came of the missing vessel.

Months also went by, and then intense excitement and alarm were felt from the king down to his most humble subject.

Rumors of war too came from the Colonies, which were on the eve of open revolt against the king, and this in a measure soon drew the attention from the missing Silver Ship.

But the king and his ministers hoped the more for the coming of the treasure, for the money was sadly needed in those troublous times.

One day a cruiser arrived in London, and her commander hastily repaired to the palace and begged an audience with the king, sending in word that at once admitted him to the presence of his Majesty.

He was greeted warmly, and then his Majesty quickly asked:

"Now, sir, what news have you of the Silver Ship?"

"Your Majesty, I sighted the brig Wind Witch just fifty leagues off the port of New York, and as I was here when she sailed, and knowing your anxiety regarding her, I at once headed toward her, at the same time signaling for her to come to, for it was broad daylight."

"The signals were unanswered, and when I started in pursuit, sail was crowded on and she fled with full speed, and so swiftly indeed as to quickly leave even my fleet sloop astern."

"Night came on and she seemed to melt away like a phantom, in the mist and gloom."

"This is remarkable, Captain Dunning; but are you sure that it was the brig, and not one of those swift-sailing privateers the Americans are putting on the seas as rebel cruisers?"

"I know the Wind Witch too well, your Majesty, to be mistaken in her, sire; it was your brig."

"Did you examine her closely through your glass?"

"Yes, your Majesty, and I saw that which caused me to allow no officer to look at her through a glass," and the captain spoke with an impressiveness that moved the king to ask impatiently:

"In heavens name, Dunning, what saw you?"

"I have not been given to a belief in superstition, your Majesty, and hence have laughed at others' fears of the supernatural; but after what I saw on board the Wind Witch, I shall laugh no more."

"Did you not hear me demand of you to know what it was that you saw?" said the king so sternly that the startled captain answered hastily:

"Her officers and crew were skeletons, your Majesty."

"What! dare you fling such fool ideas into the teeth of your king?"

"Pardon, your Majesty; but if other commanders who may meet the Silver Ship make not the same report, then I am willing to undergo any punishment my king may see fit to administer."

"Dunning, you are not one to trifl, I feel assured, nor a man to be readily deceived, and I wish you to tell me just what you beheld?"

"I told your Majesty that when I squared away to run down to the brig, she at once started to fly, and what I saw was that the men who went up aloft to set sail, the officers upon the quarter-deck, and the crew were all skeletons, and this is true so help me Heaven!"

"But I could hardly believe my senses, until my first officer uttered a cry, and springing to my side cried excitedly:

"Turn your glass upon her, sir, for mine reveals an appalling sight."

"I commanded him to be silent, and to look no more, while I sent the glasses below."

"Half an hour after, as I told your Majesty, the Silver Ship disappeared in a mist and the gathering darkness."

"Dunning, speak of this to no one, and I'll see what more is heard of that mysterious Silver Ship," said his Majesty.

But it was very evident that he was deeply impressed by the words of the old sea-captain.

CHAPTER II.

THE TREASURE WRECK.

A SCHOONER, armed with a very heavy battery for her tonnage, and carrying a very large area of canvas, was sailing along in southern seas one pleasant morning a century ago, when from the lookout aloft came the ever startling cry at sea:

"Sail ho!"

The men were scattered about the decks in lazy attitudes, some of them asleep, others smoking, a few playing games and a group watching with great interest the amusing antics of a couple of monkeys and a parrot playing amicably together.

The men were as hard a looking lot of fellows as ever disgraced a deck, and it would not require a glance at the black flag floating from the peak to show that they were lawless rovers of the sea.

The schooner bore many scars of having been in close action, her sails were patched, her rigging spliced in many places where shot had cut it away, and the decks were seamed with gashes where the cannon-balls had cut their way along, leaving death and anguish behind.

A bearded, uniformed officer, whose dark face denoted his Spanish origin, paced the quarter-deck, and two others, in the same gaudy costume, were asleep upon the deck, preferring it to their hot bunks below.

At the cry of the lookout every man was instantly on the *qui vive*, and the officer called out in broken English:

"Whereaway, sir, and what is she?"

"Dead ahead, sir, and it is a wreck."

"Av, ay," and turning to the companionway the officer called out.

"A wreck in sight, Senor Captain."

"Ay ay, sir," responded a deep voice from within the cabin, and soon after the speaker appeared upon deck.

He was a remarkable looking individual, six feet in height, erect and with the bearing of a courtier, while his face, darkly bronzed by exposure was flushed with perfect health and as handsome as an Adonis.

His eyes were large, black and strangely brilliant, and his hair, a dark brown hung in curls upon his broad shoulders.

His face was clean shaven, displaying a handsome mouth, with even rows of milk-white teeth.

His dress was of white velvet, jacket trimmed with gold lace, and with marine epaulettes, while a scarlet sash encircled his slender waist and in it were stuck two gold-mounted double-barrel pistols of that age, while a work of exquisite design and rich workmanship hung by a chain upon his hip.

His pantaloons were also of white velvet, seamed with a red and gold stripe, and stuck into handsome cavalier boots.

His collar and cuffs were of the finest lace, and jewels glittered in his shirt-front and upon his fingers, while a large pin, in the design of an anchor set with rubies and diamonds fastened a

scarlet plume into his black hat, which was also encircled by a gold cord.

"Well, Fornesca, what have you found this time?" he asked of his second lieutenant as he reached the deck.

"The lookout reports a wreck dead ahead, sir, and my glass shows her to be deserted, though one mast is standing with two sails upon it, Captain Belmont."

"We'll pick her up, Fornesca, for she may prove to be a prize in disguise," and the voice of Belmont the Buccaneer was rich and melodious in tone.

"Yes, senor," and orders were issued to stand by and lower away a boat, when the wreck should be neared.

As the schooner approached the wreck, it could be seen that it was of a large ship, and that she was settling slowly in the water.

Her mizzen-mast still stood, though the topmast was gone, and her fore and mainmasts had been carried away close to the decks.

Her bulwarks were stove in, and there was every indication that she had been under a hot fire, coming from astern, which showed that she had been flying from some foe.

Upon her decks, as Captain Belmont boarded, for he went in the boat, were half a dozen dead bodies, all bearing shot marks except one, and that one seemed to have been but a short while dead.

Upon the mizzen-mast were yet clinging storm-shot, or wind-torn sails, and the flag, the Spanish ensign, was nailed some twenty feet above the decks.

But though the pirate chief had the vessel searched, not a living being could be found.

But there was one thing found which caused the face of the buccaneer captain to flush with pleasure, and this was a book he had discovered upon the table in the cabin under the hand of the dead commander of the barque.

A quill pen was still held in the lifeless hand that rested upon the book, and an unfinished sentence showed that death, from a cannon-shot that had entered the stern port and crushed in his skull, had ended his life while he was writing in the book.

The sentence was:

"I can do no more, for my ship is almost a wreck under this hot fire, a storm is coming on, my crew have nearly all been slain and the treasure if not taken by my pursuers, must go down in the sinking barque to the depths of—"

Here the sentence ended, and the log of the captain was ended by his sudden death.

The writing was in Spanish, and a glance at the log showed that the vessel was the Mexican barque *El Cinto de Acero** bound from Vera Cruz to Spain.

And her cargo?

A cry that ended in a shout of joy, broke the lips of the pirate captain, and springing upon deck again he hailed loudly:

"Ho, the Blue Belt ahoy!"

"Ahoy the wreck!" responded Officer Fornesca.

"Bring the Blue Belt alongside of her sister the Steel Belt, and lose no time about it, for this craft is a Mexican with not a soul on board, bound from Vera Cruz to Spain, and her cargo is tons of silver pesos."

A wild yell burst from the lips of the pirate crew on board the schooner, and was echoed by the men who had boarded the wreck with their chief, and under the latter's orders silver bullion and strong bags of pesos were brought on deck by the now excited buccaneers, preparatory to being removed to the schooner.

The schooner was soon brought alongside, for the sea was smooth, and willing hands were busy transferring the treasure to the cabin of their craft, while Captain Belmont stood on the bulwarks keeping tally of the bars and bags as they were brought on deck and passed over.

"It is a fabulous fortune for us, Fornesca; but we must hasten to hide it away, for our own vessel is barely able to keep afloat; as you know, and in her strained condition I would not wish to be caught in a storm in her."

"It would be hardly safe, Senor Captain, and I would advise running for an island in the Caribbean as soon as possible, and hiding the treasure."

"I'll do it, and then we must capture a merchant craft and play honest, to enter some port with our booty."

"The barque was evidently blown down the Gulf by the late severe storms we barely weathered, and the tempest doubtless saved her from capture by her pursuer, whoever it was, and so we get the magnificent treasure."

"I shall give up piracy, Fornesca, and turn gentleman on this lucky find."

"I will enjoy my share, Senor Captain, for a while, and then again sail under the pirate flag, for I have become too fascinated with the wild life of a sea-rover to ever give it up."

"Until you are hanged, Fornesca, at the yard-arm; but you always were a red-handed fiend, while I have simply killed to get gold."

"Come, lads, night is upon us, and we must lose no time."

The men quickened their pace, and an hour

*The Belt of Steel.

after nightfall had removed all the silver and other booty worth taking to the schooner.

And just in time, for the wreck had settled low, and, as the pirate craft squared away under sail, with a great lunge fore and aft, plunged beneath the sea to a grave in its depths.

CHAPTER III.

THE WIZARD PRIEST OF THE ISLE.

To a vessel cruising near, an island in the Caribbean Sea looked desolate, barren of vegetation, and seemed hardly a spot where a man could find a habitation.

And yet a human being stood upon a bold cliff of the island, while his gaze was fixed upon a distant sail, heading on a course that must bring the vessel near him in passing.

The man was large, well-formed, and had a long brown beard, and hair that fell to his waist.

He was dressed in a suit of brown linen, and wore upon his head a hat of Panama straw, which was as flexible as felt.

"The first sail that I have seen in four years, and it heads this way.

"But do I wish to signal it, do I wish to leave this island, when I am at peace with the life I lead here, and go once more among struggling men, to fly from cruel fate, to work, to strive for a living?

"No, I believe I would rather remain here, without fear, contented, if not happy.

"Ah! the craft has gone about upon a tack that must bring her here, and perhaps to anchor.

"It may be that she needs fresh water, and it may be that it is a pirate seeking for a hiding-place for his treasure.

"Well, she is coming here, and whatever she be, I will be prepared to receive the crew."

So saying he turned from the cliff and a walk along a plateau of a hundred yards brought him to a strange view.

The outer edge of the island was but a shell broken here and there with chasms, through which however no view of the interior could be seen in passing.

This shell, or wall, surrounded a basin, or formed one, and it was fertile and beautiful to gaze upon.

No tree was allowed to grow above the top of the wall and thus display vegetation upon the island from those on the deck of a ship.

But the land was good, and fruit trees grew in abundance, with a small lake, or pond of crystal waters that found their way to the sea in a small inlet.

There was a cabin on the shore of the lake, a garden patch in the rear in which vegetables were growing, and some tobacco-plants also.

A small herd of goats fed about the valley; and these were the only other sign of life except the man who had stood upon the cliff.

Down the rugged path he went, across the valley and disappearing within the cabin he closed the door behind him.

In the mean time the vessel had run close in shore, some one on board evidently acting as pilot, and a boat was lowered and pulled for the island under four oars.

In the stern sat two officers, and one was Captain Belmont, the other his first officer, Senor Fornesca.

The latter was acting as pilot for the boat, and in answer to the question of his chief if he was sure that he could run a boat in to a landing, answered:

"As I told you, Senor Captain, I was wrecked upon this island once, and spent three months here, so know the only channel in and out, and nothing larger than a ship's long boat can go in.

"See, I head for yonder break in the cliff, after rounding this rock, and if you will glance down into the sea you will discover that there is a channel-way between sunken rocks all the way in."

"I see them, and if one of the boats loaded with our silver strikes, all will go down beyond the getting again."

"Sure, Senor Captain, for there are many fathoms beneath us.

"Now we are inshore, where in quiet weather a boat can lie; but in rough weather, no."

As he spoke the pirate officer brought the boat alongside of a rocky cliff and he sprung out, followed by his chief and the men.

"You say the interior of the island is fertile?"

"Yes, senor."

"And no one dwells here?"

"Ah no, senor, not a soul."

"Yet you lived here for months!"

"Yes, senor, for our ship was driven in on the reefs, and we saved her stores; but as soon as we could build from the wreckage a boat, we set sail for Cuba and reached there in safety; but I believe no other foot ever trod upon the island than mine and my boat's crew."

They ascended the steep wall of the island and gained a point from whence they could look down into the basin, and as they did so the outlaw lieutenant uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Oh, senor! some one is here!

"But we can kill them and thus make our secret hiding-place safe."

"You are ever ready to take life, Fornesca;

but call the men and we will go down into this very pretty valley and see who it is that dwells in yonder comfortable-looking cabin.

As he spoke the chief strode on down the steep hill, leaving the lieutenant to follow with the men when they came.

As he approached the cabin he drew his sword, like a man who meant to be prepared, and knocking sharply stepped quickly back out of arm's reach.

No response came to his knock, and he pushed open the door.

Then he started back suddenly and devoutly crossed himself, at the same time dropping upon one knee.

The cabin within was a miniature Roman chapel.

Just around the door was a space for worshippers, and beyond was the chancel, the altar, the burning candles, crucifix and all to make up the perfect little Spanish chapel of those times.

And then, standing facing the door stood a man in priestly garb, his hair snow white and falling to his waist, his snowy beard equally as long, while upon his head fastened upon a crown, and supported by two skeleton hands was a human skull.

It was snow-white, perfect, and grinned ominously at the pirate chief as he knelt before the door of the chapel.

In his hand the aged chief held a wand, painted red, and upon the end of which was another skeleton human hand.

Glancing upward the pirate saw that the roof of the cabin was black, and through it twinkled simulated lights meant for stars.

"Why hast thou come here to this sacred spot, Belmont the Buccaneer?" cried the priest, in a deep, sepulchral-toned voice that caused the pirate to shudder.

"To seek thy blessing, holy father," was the humble response, and as the others came up just then, they too dropped upon their knees.

"What! dost thou come to me with a falsehood upon thy lips?"

"Beware, for though I be a priest, I also am a wizard, and I read the stars as open books. I read men's hearts as though I could see through them."

"Thou knewest not, Belmont the Buccaneer, that I was here, and thou comest here, guided by thy officer, Fornesca, to hide upon this island thy ill-gotten pirate treasure."

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER A SPELL.

THAT he was known by the Wizard Priest was a cause of amazement, not unmixed with awe, to Captain Belmont, while to Fornesca, that his name should be called, it was a source of terror to him.

The men, even more superstitious than their officers, were terribly alarmed, and muttered their prayers audibly.

"I am known to you, holy father, it seems," said Captain Belmont, wishing to attract the attention of the wizard from his having told him a falsehood.

"Yes, as a red rover of the seas do I know you, Belmont."

"We have never met before, father."

"Did I not tell thee that I was a wizard, a seer, and to me the deeds of men are known when I behold their faces."

"Fornesca there was thy pilot to this island, in whose recesses thou didst come to bury treasure found upon the seas."

The men all started, for in his words, "treasure found upon the seas," the Wizard Priest seemed to even read the story of how their rich cargo of bullion had been obtained.

"Dost deny my words, Belmont the Buccaneer?" asked the Wizard Priest, sternly.

"No, father, thou hast the mind to read the hearts of men."

"I found a wreck afloat upon the seas, its cargo silver bullion, and as my own schooner is in an unsafe condition to keep the ocean, I came here to hide the treasure and then sail to some port to secure a suitable vessel to return and remove it."

"I am glad, holy father, that thou art here, for in thy keeping will I leave my treasure until our return, knowing that it will be safe."

"Man, your tongue talks idly, for it is not my mission to hold treasure for others."

"I am an old man, as you see, tottering into the grave, and a few weeks, months perhaps, certainly a year or two, will end my span of life."

"I am here alone, an exile from my fellow-men, and here your treasure will be safe if I live to guard it."

"But should death come upon me, then who can tell which one of your men will come to get it from thee?"

"No, bury it here as in a grave, and then let me, as wizard and priest, bestow upon the one who touches it, the one who would come here alone for it, to cheat his fellow-men, the curse of heaven and of hell."

"Do you hear my words, Belmont the Buccaneer, for they are meant to be taken to heart by all, and he who objects to the curse upon

him, has already formed the plan to kill his comrades and return for the riches, that he may enjoy them alone."

Belmont the Buccaneer started visibly, as did also Fornesca, and then cowered under the eye of the Wizard Priest.

After a moment of silence, he asked:

"Do you obey my will, Belmont the Buccaneer?"

"I do, holy father."

"Then bring the treasure here, and when all is ready to place in a spot I will show you, then have each one of your men come hither at midnight, for I must act beneath the starlight."

"Remember, not a human being must remain on board your ship, all must come hither, or the charm will be broken."

"It shall be as you say, holy father," and turning to Fornesca, Belmont gave him orders to return to the schooner and bring the boats ashore with their precious cargoes.

Instantly the door of the cabin chapel was closed, and after waiting, to see if the priest would appear, the chief walked away and began to look over the island.

One by one the boats came, and the bullion when landed was taken up by the crew ashore and borne down to a position near the cabin.

Twilight found the men still busy at their work, and when the last load had been brought from the boat and deposited in a heap, the chapel door opened and a glare of light shone forth.

Out stepped the Wizard Priest, his garment now a blood-red, yet still wearing the ghastly skull crown, and with a wand that was black, while the skeleton hand upon the end of it was crimson.

He came straight toward the group of sailors, his right hand bearing the wand, his left upholding a torch the flames of which were of blue, green and red.

The seamen dropped upon their knees, crossing themselves rigorously, and muttering prayers.

The Wizard Priest walked to the pile of bullion, gave a look at it and then in silence passed on.

He halted at the upper end of the little lake, and pointing toward the water drove the skeleton hand into it.

Instantly arose a sound such as when hot iron and water come in contact, and a slight smoke arose.

"There, Belmont, is the hiding-place for thy treasure, and not in the earth."

"The sea gave it to you, so let water conceal it."

"This pool here is ten feet in depth, and it will hide thy silver until thou com'st for it, 'twill hide it from every eye, but those who know where it rests."

"Let all await my coming here, and I will come at the midnight hour to lay the curse upon the head of him who would seek this spot without his comrades to gain the riches for himself alone."

The Wizard turned and walked away, disappearing once more within his cabin, while the men stood about in groups, talking in awed tones and strangely nervous at their surroundings.

The time they waited seemed hours, and yet not even Belmont gave utterance to impatient imprecations at the delay until the skies became overcast and then he said in an angry tone:

"That old white-headed seer is gathering a storm about our ears, Fornesca, and if we do not look out we'll all go to the bottom, for the schooner will not weather another tempest."

"Sh—Senor Captain, for the love of God say nothing against the holy father to anger him."

"He does not hear me."

"But he knows, senor, he knows, for he is a wizard," cried the terrified Fornesca, and his fright at once impressed Belmont, who spoke not another word until again the cabin door opened and the priest appeared.

This time he carried his wand alone, the one with the red band, and he called out:

"Belmont, send an officer and twelve of thy men here."

"Go, Fornesca, with twelve men."

"We are thirteen, Senor Captain."

"Then disobey the Wizard if you prefer."

"Oh, no, senor, but the number, thirteen, and it is so unlucky."

"Will you obey, Belmont?"

"Yes, holy father, they come at thy bidding," was the answer, and Fornesca not daring longer to delay went to the cabin, followed by the twelve trembling seamen.

"Six of you take these torches."

The men obeyed and took up the six torches just inside the cabin door.

"Now, you six take this coffin," and the Wizard pointed to a black coffin in front of the altar, upon which the candles were burning brightly.

"My son, do you carry this Book of Judgment," and the Wizard Priest took from the altar a large book and placed it in the hands of Fornesca.

"Now lead the way to the pool, and you torch-bearers follow, while you bearers of the coffin follow me."

Thus the procession, appalling in its weird-

ness, moved toward the head of the pool and there halted.

"Belmont, now bid thy men bear thy silver hither and drop it, bar by bar, and bag by bag, into this pool."

Belmont gave the order, and the crew hastily moved away in obedience, and the hiding of the treasure was begun.

CHAPTER V.

THE WIZARD PRIEST'S CURSE.

It was a weird, strangely fascinating picture, the burying of the pirate treasure in that lone island in the Caribbean Sea.

There stood the Wizard Priest in his gown of crimson, and his crown of a human skull upheld by two skeleton hands.

Upon either side of him were three seamen upholding flaming torches, and at his feet the coffin which had been brought from the chapel.

Near by stood Belmont, the Buccaneer, his arms folded upon his broad breast, while the crew of the Blue Belt brought the bars of silver and bags of coins and dropped them into the pool at the feet of the Wizard Priest.

Overhead the storm-clouds were gathering, and already were flashes of lightning darting across the skies.

To say that the men were nervous would be to speak mildly, for off-shore, with no haven near, and within hail of a rocky island shore, lay their schooner at anchor and not one soul on board.

But, the men dared not speak in the presence of that weird human being who stood before them, and they performed their work in silence.

At last the work was ended and the waters had closed over the whole treasure taken from the wreck, and a box of riches brought from on board the schooner.

Then the Wizard Priest called to the men who had borne the coffin and bade them raise it.

"Swing it to and fro thirteen times, and at the thirteenth time cast it from you into the pool," he ordered.

The men obeyed, and with a heavy splash the coffin struck the waters and after rocking a moment upon the waves, sunk from sight to settle down upon the treasure below.

Then raising his wand on high, the Wizard slowly lowered it until the red skeleton hand touched the waters, and, holding it there he said sternly:

"The Book of Judgment, Fornesca."

The trembling officer approached, and, at a motion from the Wizard, knelt and opened the volume.

Still holding his wand in the water with his right hand, the Wizard Priest placed his left upon the open page and cried:

"Kneel all!"

As one man they obeyed; then he demanded: "Thy full name, Belmont, the Buccaneer."

"Brandt Belmont, holy father."

"And thine, Fornesca?"

"Franco Fornesca, father."

"And thine?" he asked the next officer, and so went on until the name of each officer had been given.

"Men, thy lips have lied to me, for thine own true names have not been given; but they are registered here with thy false ones, and so will stand within this Book of Judgment."

To a man they all looked guilty, and a few, in their alarm, shouted out their real names; but, unheeding them the Wizard Priest, with left hand upraised, began to chant in a loud, ringing voice that sent back answering echoes from the rocks:

"Within this pool,

"Within this sacred isle,

"Deep in the depths lie hid

"Treasure untold—

"Treasure stained with blood,

"Treasure that has wrung tears

"From human hearts.

"Within this pool, hidden

"From all mortal eyes

"It lies.

"Thou, high Heaven, looking down—

"Thou lost soul in Hades looking up—

"Keep watch and ward upon these riches hid!

"Within this book the names are writ

"That claim this treasure hid within these depths.

"Should man of these come here to defraud—

"Should man of these seek that not his own,

"Then accursed be he on earth, on sea, alive, and dead!

"Homeless, havenless, let him wander until eternity,

"And lost be he forevermore!"

A groan of horror broke from the lips of the pirate crew in chorus as the Wizard Priest ended his curse, and then came, in a startling voice, seemingly from the air, a loud, wildly spoken:

"Amen!"

The renewed terror of the men at this, seemingly a so-be-it to the weird curse uttered above the pool, caused all to fail to notice that the voice seemed also to bring a cry of alarm from the lips of the Wizard Priest.

But so it was, and quickly he raised his face toward the direction from whence the voice had come, but all was darkness there.

Then he said, and there was a quiver in his tones:

"Now, Belmont, let thee and thy men get thee hence, to return not until thou comest for thy treasure."

"Adios, senors," and, taking his book, the Wizard Priest walked away toward his cabin, while, relieved of his presence, and anxious to regain their vessel, the pirate crew started in a perfect rush for the shore, while Belmont felt himself borne along, willingly, with the mass of struggling men.

The boats were reached, but the sea was rising, and a voice from their chief calmed the turbulent, frightened men, for all knew that in the darkness and rough waters, Senor Fornesca must lead the way.

This he did in the gig, the other boats following close astern, and as they moved away, suddenly from the cliff above came a burst of wild, demoniacal laughter, and a vivid flash of lightning revealed standing upon the cliff the wild, weird form of a woman!

The men bent fiercely to their oars, and sent their boats flying toward the schooner, which was tugging impatiently at her anchor, and, throwing themselves on board in quicker time than ever before, the pirate craft was soon under sail and away from the dread isle.

The Wizard Priest, who had come from the cabin and watched the men depart from the valley, also heard that wild laughter and beheld that weird form upon the cliff, as revealed by the lightning's flash, and with a cry of terror fled toward the chapel, and quickly shut himself within, as though to shield himself from some danger he dared not face.

There he, who with his incantations and weird deeds had frightened a crew of pirates, sat cowering with fear, and starting at every sound made by the wailing winds.

CHAPTER VI.

A BOAT'S CREW.

THE fears of Captain Belmont regarding his schooner were well-founded, for she had received many severe knocks the past year, and had buffeted many rude storms, without any repairs other than what could be made at sea.

Weakened by the fire she had withstood, and strained by the heavy seas, she was leaking badly, and in no condition to fight her way much longer.

In fact her commander had held the fear that she would never reach a retreat in safety which he had in mind, and where she could undergo a thorough overhauling.

As the boats had moved away from the Wizard's Isle the mocking laughter which had been flung after them, had caused the crew even greater terror than the old Hermit of the Isle had inspired them with, great as that was.

They were to a man, filled with superstition, and this had been heightened by their life upon the seas and their red deeds of outlawry.

But they were not to escape without another sight of this new cause of terror, and a hail from the one whose lips had sent forth such mocking laughter.

A more vivid flash of lightning had again revealed her, and she was, as it were, imaged in the brain of every man as she stood there on the edge of the cliff, her long white hair blowing wildly out upon the wind, her short skirts fluttering and flapping and her hands outstretched toward them as though pointing them out to the Storm King.

"Ay, ay, you red-handed fiends, go your way over the trackless seas, but remember that for the falsehoods in your hearts wreck and death will follow, for there is not a man of you but has it in his mind to return and alone secure this silver treasure.

"Hal! hal! hal! go your ways, sirs, but in your struggle with death remember the warning of Selah, the Sea Witch."

Every word, borne upon the winds reached the crews of the five boats, and the arms of the oarsmen were almost paralyzed with terror until the stern voice of their chief recalled them to action:

"What, cowards! does an old bag's chattering take your nerve from you?

"Pull for your lives, or the boats will swamp in this sea!"

Thus urged the men began to struggle hard once more at the oars, and, as has been seen the schooner was reached in safety.

Up to the davits went the boats, up came the anchor, and the schooner sped away like a frightened thing of life over the waves.

But the tempest increased in fury as the island was lost sight of, and the schooner was put before the gale and scudded away like a mad racer with the bit in his teeth.

Soon the carpenter reported the leak gaining rapidly and the crew were sent to the pumps.

But all that they could do was to barely keep the water from gaining rapidly, though slowly and surely gain it did.

Soon after midnight, while the schooner was still driving along under storm-sails, she began to labor heavily, the water in her hold causing

her to lurch badly and sometimes to pitch bows under when a huge following wave would raise her stern to a dangerous height.

To prevent her from going under bows first, Belmont the Buccaneer, who handled his craft with masterly skill and coolness, ordered the guns thrown into the sea.

Thus lightened, after a desperate fight with the waves to accomplish this, the schooner rose in the waters and behaved better, and the men worked harder at the pumps with renewed hope.

But toward dawn the schooner was again down to the same level, and through the broken bulwarks, where the cannon had been thrown into the ocean, the waves broke relentlessly, and fully a score of the crew had been swept away to death.

At dawn the winds began to fall, and the sea to go down; but too late the storm ended to save the schooner, for she was settling so fast that the boats were ordered ready, with water and provisions on board.

In the life-boat went Captain Belmont, with the riches that yet remained on board the schooner, and with him were a dozen men.

Fornesca took the long-boat with a score of men, and the second officer with the remainder of the crew went in the large yawl.

The order was given to cast off, and under the eye of their captain the men in the life-boat promptly obeyed, and with a strong pull got free from the sinking schooner.

But not so the other boats, for with a mighty spring, like a giant's last struggle, the schooner lifted herself half out of water and then plunged bow first into the sea, drawing the two boats into the engulfing caldron.

The painter of the long-boat was cut by Fornesca with a sword just in the second of time, for as it was there was an instant of appalling suspense.

But the yawl was less fortunate, and the strong painter made fast to the schooner's taffrail, was dragged down with it into the depths of the sea.

There were wild shrieks of despair, and then a minute after a form here and there arose among the debris, but no aid was extended by the other boats, for it was a time when the demand of self-preservation blunted all feelings of friendship and comradeship.

Once the schooner had disappeared the life-boat spread a small sail and began to move away from the long-boat, notwithstanding the piteous cries of Fornesca and his crew not to leave them.

The long-boat had no sail, and Fornesca showed his cruel nature by using his sword upon the man whose duty it had been to put the mast and canvas in the boat.

Pitifully pleaded the poor fellow for mercy, but Fornesca was never known to show mercy, and so the man died under the blows of the pirate officer's sword.

In the mean time those in the life-boat had lost sight of the long-boat, though the white sails of the former were still visible to Fornesca and his men, and when night came upon the now placid sea, nothing but the frail craft in which were Belmont and his crew were visible upon the wide expanse of waters.

Soon after nightfall a calm fell upon the sea, and the worn-out seamen, captain and all, after a supper that barely satisfied their hunger, sunk fast to sleep and did not awaken until the dawn.

Then they were startled at discovering land, a vessel, and that a breeze had sprung up, seemingly together.

"Curse us for sleepy-heads; with yonder land in sight and this breeze we could have escaped; but yonder craft is a British cruiser, and it remains to be seen if our story of shipwrecked merchantmen will be believed," cried Belmont, and he began hastily to cast aside his uniform and search for the dress of a common seaman.

But none had been brought in the hurry of departure from the schooner, and he was forced to admit that he must tell another story to pass muster on board the English vessel-of-war, which was coming rapidly down toward the life-boat.

Ten minutes after they were hailed and told to come alongside, and as they reached the deck an officer asked:

"Well, sir, who and what are you?"

"From a Mexican schooner, senor, that went down in the tempest of night before last," replied Belmont.

"Pardon me, Captain Ashton, but this man is Belmont the Buccaneer, and I also recognize as well, half a dozen of his men as being upon the Blue Belt when I was the pirate's prisoner," and a young lieutenant stepped forward.

"Ah, say you so, DeLisle? Can you not be mistaken?" asked Captain Ashton earnestly.

"Never in that man, sir, for you see that he is no ordinary personage."

"I know him well, sir, and he is doubtless shipwrecked, as he says; but if the contents of his boat are examined you will doubtless find pirate booty—see there, sir, that blue line around his life-boat!"

"By Neptune, but you are right, I believe, DeLisle."

"Go and examine the contents of his boat," ordered the British captain.

This was done and no other proof was needed, for there was damning evidence there.

"So, Sir Pirate Captain, you played the game of the honest shipwrecked mariner on me, and but for my young lieutenant here who was once your prisoner, you would have deceived me with your frank face, which is a handsome one for a man of your deeds."

"But DeLisle was your prisoner once, when he boarded you in a fight in a storm, and the vessels swung apart leaving him on board your craft, which managed to escape, and he remembered you I am glad to say."

"What have you to say, Sir Pirate?"

"That Fate is against me, sir, for you picked up a shipwrecked boat's crew and accuse us of being pirates."

"Very well, I'll stand the consequences of DeLisle's charge against you, and as I am on my way home will take you to England for trial."

"Mr. DeLisle, put these men in irons," and Captain Ashton of his British Majesty's sloop-of-war Iron Heart went below in considerable glee over his capture of Belmont the Buccaneer.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRICE OF A LIFE.

"I DESIRE an audience with the king, and would most respectfully urge that he grant it, as I can give him important information."

So said Captain Belmont, the Buccaneer, after his trial in London with his crew found in the boat with him, and the sentence of all to die upon the gallows within two weeks.

The message of the outlaw was taken to the king, and after some thought upon the subject his Majesty granted the petition.

Belmont and his followers had received a fair trial, and not only had the testimony of Lieutenant DeLisle condemned them, but the many things found in the life-boat with them had been proof undoubted that they were no other than the celebrated rover and his men.

The lieutenant had spoken of the kindness received from the hands of Belmont personally, and how he had landed him at Jamaica one night, giving him his pardon, but his duty as a king's officer caused him to appear against him as the pirate.

When brought before the king the buccaneer was in his uniform, and moved with the grace of a courtier.

Apparently his Majesty was alone; but there was help near should the pirate intend foul play.

"Well, Sir Pirate, you asked to see me, as you could give me information of importance?" said the king, really impressed with the bearing of the handsome outlaw.

"I did, your Majesty, beg an audience, but it is not to plead for my life, as you may infer."

"I am an American, and have broken the laws of both God and man, and for my deeds expect no mercy."

"You admit then that you are Belmont the Buccaneer, which fact you denied at your trial?"

"Your Majesty's pardon, but I made no such denial, I simply was silent when questioned."

"But I admit now that I am Belmont the Buccaneer."

"Ah! and you have a motive in doing so now?"

"I have a motive, your Majesty, in being the first one of those captured in the life-boat, to offer to purchase my life."

"They intend, my followers, to strike a trade with your Majesty; but as their chief, as the one most interested, and the only one who can, I believe, deliver the price to be paid, I have sought an interview with your Majesty."

"Then you do intend to plead for your life?"

"Oh no, your Majesty, but simply to purchase it."

"I see, and what have you to offer?"

"More than a king's ransom," was the cool rejoinder.

"Ah yes, the ill-gotten gains of your piracies."

"More than that, your Majesty, for I have to offer a cargo of silver, mined in Mexico, and found by me afloat upon the seas."

"I sought a hiding-place for my treasure, upon an island never visited, and placed it there, as I dared not trust such untold wealth longer upon my schooner, which was almost in a sinking condition."

"The wisdom of my course was seen, your Majesty, as my vessel, after leaving the island, went down in a severe storm and we were forced to take to our boats."

"One of my boats, with the crew, was dragged down with the sinking schooner, and another was adrift upon the ocean without sails or food, while my life-boat was picked up by your Majesty's sloop-of-war Iron Heart."

"And this treasure, Sir Buccaneer?"

"It is my wish to offer it to your Majesty in return for my life, though I ask with my pardon a certain sum to keep me from poverty."

"To enable you to buy and fit out another vessel you mean?"

"No, your Majesty, for I would save the purchase money and cut out one of your Majesty's fleet cruisers, did I intend again to become a pirate."

"You are a bold speaker, Sir Outlaw."

"I tell but the truth, your Majesty; but my desire is to lead a different life in the future."

"And your men?"

"They are condemned to death, and if so it please your Majesty in the kindness of your heart to give them their pardon also, I would be glad; but if not, then they must suffer as they have not the means to buy their escape from the gallows."

"And this money?"

"It is in silver bullion, your Majesty, bags of pesos, and some treasure."

"The value is about equal to fifty thousand pounds, perhaps?"

The buccaneer smiled, and replied:

"Your Majesty, I said that it was a king's ransom, and its value all told, is over a million pounds sterling, far more, I may say."

The king fairly started as this enormous sum was named, and then touching a bell, ordered the one who appeared to go and bid a certain officer to come to him.

The officer soon appeared, a senior lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and a handsome, dashing-looking young man, who commanded the king's yacht, and was an especial favorite with his Majesty.

"Sir St. George, I wish you to hear what propositions this buccaneer chief makes to me."

"Yes, your Majesty," and St. George Maybrick turned to the buccaneer, who, in his free-and-easy manner repeated what he had said about the hidden treasure, adding:

"My proposition to his Majesty, Sir George, is to sail in a vessel-of-war, in irons, if so his Majesty pleases, and lead him to this treasure."

"Failing in doing so, then the officer in command can hang me to the yard-arm of his vessel; but, by gaining the treasure, I am to go free, with a certain sum for my own use."

"What do you say, St. George?" asked the king.

"To accept his offer, your Majesty, and hang his fellows on the day set, and to yard-arm him, too, if he does not do as he says."

"I will do so, St. George, and I promote you now to a captaincy, and place you in command of the vessel to go after the treasure."

"Your pardon, your Majesty; but the vessel that should be sent should be fleet as the wind to prevent the capture of the treasure, and able to defend herself, also."

"You are right, buccaneer, and I will send an armed brig I am now building for my own yacht."

"Captain St. George Maybrick, lose no time in fitting out for sea the Wind Witch, and spare no expense," said the king.

And so it was that the crew captured in the life-boat were hanged on the day set, while their chief, Belmont the Buccaneer, sailed in the fleet armed yacht for the island of the Wizard Priest, to buy his life with the treasure lying hidden there.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WIZARD AND A WITCH.

It will be remembered by the reader, that when the loud "amen" was spoken, at the end of the Wizard's curse, coming seemingly from the clouds, the strange dweller upon the island was as much, if not more startled than were any of the pirate crew whom he had gained such an ascendancy over by his necromancy.

It was something that he could not account for, while the men attributed it to his wondrous powers.

He was glad, therefore, to get rid of the crew, and had gone out to watch their departure when the flash of vivid lightning revealed to him, standing upon the cliff, overlooking the pirate schooner, the wild, weird form of a woman.

"Bah! it is some one from the schooner, some trick of that daring fellow Belmont, to see the effect upon me," muttered the old Wizard.

But when he heard the ringing, wild words of the woman to the crew of the pirate boats, rowing toward the schooner, he felt that he was mistaken in this belief, that whoever, or whatever the being was she belonged to the schooner.

And then, in terror, he fled from the glen to his cabin and shut himself within.

Behind the altar was a door which led into an extension of the cabin, cleverly built in an arched fissure, or cavern of the rocks.

It looked from without as though the chapel part of the cabin was built against the rocks and there ended.

But it was instead constructed against this cavern, and into this was a large living-room constructed of material from wrecked vessels.

So cleverly was this concealed that one going behind the altar in the chapel, would find there seemingly only a priest's robing-room; but a niche in the rear, in which was a statue of the Virgin, would turn on a pivot, when a secret spring was touched, revealing a doorway large enough to admit the Wizard, and it led into his living-room.

The room was large, comfortable, furnished with ship's furniture, and had a fireplace in one end, the smoke going upward through a hole in the rocks.

Behind this fireplace was a secret door, and

this led into a tunnel, narrow, but some six feet in height, which wound upward by a gentle incline and came out upon a wide shelf of rock in the face of the cliff, and overhanging the sea fifty feet below.

This shelf seemed to be a favorite abiding place with the Wizard, for a bunk, a hammock, an easy-chair and a table were here, with books in Spanish, French and English.

The arch above protected it from the rain and sun, and in front the jagged rock rose like a wall, forming it into a delightful alcove.

Over the edge of the shelf hung ropes, wove into blocks and tackle, and also a rope ladder leading downward, but all concealed by canvas which resembled the rocks at a short distance offshore, so that no vessel coming near could distinguish the slightest clew to the island being inhabited.

The ropes overhanging the rocky shelf, and the ladder led down to a large life-boat, decked over, excepting a small cockpit astern, and with a short mast and bowsprit.

A jagged pinnacle of rocks rising from the sea concealed the boat and mast from seaward, and as it swung some twenty feet above the water it was safely housed from the waves even in a storm.

The clever arrangement of the blocks and tackle enabled one man to stand upon the deck of the craft and draw it up into position, and then ascend by the rope ladder to the rocky alcove above.

To one standing on the rocks overhanging the alcove, its existence would not be suspected, nor would the swinging craft be detected, so that the little sea-room and its secret were completely veiled from any one who might visit the island, while the chapel, and the white-haired priest dwelling there as a hermit, no one would think of disturbing.

After remaining for some time in his inner room behind the chapel, the Wizard Priest wended his way through the couple of hundred feet of tunnel into the alcove chamber.

The storm was raging, and he beheld the lights of the schooner afar off, pitching violently in the rough waters.

The wind whistled and wailed about the rock-chamber, and caused his long, snowy hair and beard to whip about his shoulders and form as he stood gazing out over the storm-lashed sea.

"My God! what meant that voice?

"Who is that woman?" he gasped, as his thoughts were dwelling constantly upon the strange being whom he had both seen and heard.

At last he became more calm and said, assuringly: "It was but imagination after all.

"I have not been just well of late, and my necromancy with those pirates upset my nerves."

"It cannot be that any one is here—no, no," and the Wizard Priest went to his sleeping-room and retired.

But not to sleep, for that strange voice and form he heard and saw again and again whenever he closed his eyes in slumber, and at last he sprung from his couch and paced the floor until the gray dawn stole in through the window over the chancel in the chapel.

With the dawn of day, with the island no longer shadowed in the gloom of the night, his spirits rose, and placing a pistol and sword underneath his robe he stole forth from the chapel and began to search through the valley.

His goats gave him a welcoming bleat as they beheld him, but unheeding them he went to the pool and took a long draught of clear, cold water.

Standing where he had the night before, when delivering his curse, he gazed down into the pool, but its dark depths hid the secret buried there even from his eyes.

The torches were there to remind him of the night gone by, and he gathered them up in a heap for future use.

The tracks of the visiting pirates were also there, and nothing more did he see.

But he began the search of the rock-walled valley, going here and there among the thickets, until he had traversed the fertile basin, which comprised some twenty acres.

Then he began to search the half-dozen breaks, or fissures in the outer wall of rock encircling the valley, but suddenly halted and stood like one turned to stone, for on the cliff over the Wizard Priest stood a wild-looking form, the woman seen the night before, and from her lips came the words:

"Good morrow, holy father!

"Selah, the Sea Witch, greets the Wizard Priest, Hermit of the Isle."

CHAPTER IX.

SELAH, THE SEA WITCH.

The Wizard Priest did not move, but stood like a statue.

There on the rocks above him stood the woman who had called herself Selah, the Sea Witch.

It was a witch against a wizard.*

* Even later than a century ago wizards and witches were most religiously believed to exist, even by educated people.—THE AUTHOR.

But what was in the mind of the man was how the woman had gotten upon this island.

He had believed himself the sole occupant of the isle, and he had been content to so remain.

The woman stood on the rocks, some sixty feet away, and was a strange-looking being.

Young she certainly was, scarcely over twenty-five, and yet her hair was as white as snow, and fell about her form in thick waves, reaching to her feet.

Her eyes were very large, intensely black, with the longest of lashes, and heavy, arched brows, but these also were now white, and it gave to her face a strange, a startling expression.

Her form, tall, willowy and the perfection of grace, was erect and queenly, and her face was of a marble-like hue which no wind or sun could bronze.

But her every feature was perfect, her teeth, milk-white, were small, even, and, with her lips parted, gave a peculiar smile to her mouth that was remarkable.

She wore a robe of black cloth that clung about her form, and seemed the worse for wear, while her slender waist was encircled by an officer's belt, and a long-bladed, jewel-hilted stiletto hung at her left side.

Gems of rare value were in rings, bracelets and necklace, upon her fingers, wrists and neck, and a star of splendid rubies was upon her forehead, fast to a chain of heavy links of gold that encircled her haughty head.

Upon her small feet were slippers with jeweled buckles, and in one hand, as though using it as a staff, was a boarding-pike.

Such was the strange being, with a beauty that was startling, an appearance that was threatening, who had so mysteriously come upon the island of the Wizard Priest.

Like a man who had been struck a severe blow, the Wizard Priest stood gazing upon her, his form trembling, his lips moving, his eyes staring in strange wonder at her.

"Hal ha! hal! Holy father, you seem dazed at my presence here."

"Dost thou not know me, Cleo the Beautiful, as men once called me?"

"Have a few years changed me so that even your eyes know me not?"

"Woman, I do not know thee," and the Wizard Priest almost gasped the words.

The woman laughed viciously, and then, seeking a pathway down into the valley, came down to where he stood.

He did not retreat, he did not advance, but still stood like one in a dazed condition of mind.

"Dost not know me, holy father?"

"Come, do not pollute thy sacred lips with falsehoods, for see, I am Cleo, once the Beautiful, but now Selah, the Sea Witch."

"Thou art a Wizard, a Wizard Priest thou saidst to the pirate crew, and I am a witch."

"What, no welcome for me, and thy home yonder with food in plenty, I'll warrant me."

"I am athirst and hungry, so show thy hospitality and invite me to break bread beneath thy roof, for nowhere else can I find shelter and food upon this island."

"Come, speak to me, Ravel the Rover."

"Woman, in the name of all the saints, who are you?"

"Come, do not pretend ignorance of me, though you did believe that I was at the bottom of the sea."

"Dost not know me, Ravel the Rover?"

"No."

"Thou liest, for I am thy wife, Captain Ravel!"

The man uttered a groan, and the woman continued:

"Yes, I am thy wife, Ravel, she whom thou didst marry in good faith, and who didst follow thee even into thy pirate career."

"Thy wife, whom thou didst seek to rid thyself of, and so one night set me adrift in an open boat, with my jewels only as company, telling me to seek Neptune's aid, or Satan's, to aid me."

"You and your drunken pirate crew, upon whose superstitious fears you played, telling them that I was a star of ill omen to you and to the ship, saw me drift away in the darkness of the night, in the face of a coming storm, and, as you all supposed, to die."

"That night of horror, Ravel the Rover, turned my hair snow-white—see, even my dark eyebrows and long black lashes you once admired so much, became like my hair, and all in a few hours."

"Why the fierce storm that raged through the night did not swamp my frail boat I know not; but, though tossed about upon the waves, it lived, and two days after I drifted ashore upon the Mexican Coast, near the ranch of a wealthy Spaniard."

"I was taken to his hacienda nearer dead than alive, and nursed back to health again, and my story to those who were so kind to me was that I had been kidnapped from my home in America by pirates and held for ransom, but had escaped from their vessel one night and drifted ashore near the Spaniard's hacienda."

"So they believed me, and as I told them I had no near kindred they allowed me to become the governess of the fair young daughter of Don Henrico Val Verde."

"Some six weeks ago we started for Spain in a barque owned by Don Val Verde, and which was bearing silver bullion from the mines, and bags of *pesos* for the Spanish Government."

"When a few days out we were chased by a cruiser, and our flight continued for days, the vessel-of-war unable to overhaul us, yet pouring in a steady fire the while, which did us much damage, killing a number of our crew, and worst of all, the Don."

"When, that night, we buried him in the sea, when the wind was blowing half a gale, and our persistent pursuer dogged our wake, his daughter, the lovely Inez, my pupil, suddenly threw herself into the sea and was lost."

"At last, when our ship was wrecked by the fire of the cruiser, and further flight was impossible, the men cried that they knew the pursuer, that it was a pirate, and we gave up all for lost."

"But ere he could come alongside, cruiser or pirate, whatever the craft was, a terrible tornado swept down upon us, and our wrecked barque was driven before it, and I never again saw the dreaded enemy."

"When I came upon deck the next day, I found that I was alone with the dead, for the few living had been swept into the sea, and the Silver Ship was sinking, and I was to go down into the depths with her, I believed."

"But such was not my fate, for I sighted a sail, and horror of horrors! Ravel the Rover, I recognized your schooner, though four years had passed since I had seen her."

"I flew in terror to my hiding-place, and your crew boarded and discovered the prize they had found."

"Then began the removal of the cargo of silver, and a huge chest, in which I had hidden, was taken on board and into the cabin of the schooner, for the silks I spread over me kept me from being seen."

"Once in the cabin, when alone, I sought refuge in your storage state-room, which I knew so well, and there remained in hiding for days, feeding upon the dainties kept there, until this island was reached, and knowing all, from what I heard Captain Belmont and that fiend Fornesca say when talking in the cabin, I decided to make my escape when the crew landed here."

"And so I crept upon deck, and fastening about me a life-buoy, I slipped overboard and swam ashore close behind the last boat from the schooner."

"Need I tell you that I saw and heard all, from my hiding-place among yonder rocks, and that I knew you from your voice and bearing the moment that I heard you speak?"

"And so, Ravel the Rover, you know my story, and that fate has brought back to you her that was Cleo, the Beautiful, but now will be known, Sir Wizard, as Selah, the Sea Witch," and the woman again burst forth into her wild, mocking laughter.

CHAPTER X.

THE WIZARD'S CONFESSION.

As one in chains, forced to hear what was said to him, the Wizard Priest stood and heard all that the woman had to say.

She had called herself a witch, the name of Selah, the Sea Witch, springing into her excited brain when she saw that her pirate husband was alone upon the island and playing the part of a Wizard.

She knew that he dwelt there in absolute solitude.

Yet why?

When she had last seen him he had been the chief of a pirate crew on board of his own fleet schooner the Blue Belt.

How was it that his career had changed so?

Was he doing penance for his sins?

She recalled that he had been reared for the priesthood, but had fallen in love with her, had fought a duel to put a rival out of his way, and forced to fly from his home, she had next heard of him several years after when he came by night to visit her and stole her away to make her his wife.

She had clung to him in his evil life until another fair face, the face of a beautiful captive, had dimmed her beauty in his eyes, and when in her jealous rage at being supplanted in his love, she had aided the poor captive to escape, he had come to hate her so bitterly that he had raised the superstitious fears of the wicked crew against her, and she had been set adrift in the sea to die.

Had his remorse for this act caused him to give up piracy and settle there in that lone isle?

Such thoughts had surged through her brain like lightning, and she sought to know more.

So she said, and her voice was not harsh now:

"Ravel, I have told you of how I escaped death, and that I suffered let my white hair stand as proof, for my anguish was more than even my endurance could stand again, and I live through it."

"I have escaped the sea twice in a most miraculous manner, and now you see me what I am, a white-haired woman, old before my time, so I am but fitting to be called a witch, as the Mexicans called me."

"But I am here, and you are bound to me by

the ties of wedlock, and I would hear your story now, of why I find you here, and alone."

"Of why I find you a pretended priest and wizard, and deceiving your old lieutenants, Belmont and Fornesca, and your crew into the belief that you were a necromancer."

"Had Belmont been upon your vessel when you set me adrift that night, you would never have done so, for you feared that man, and he would never have allowed you to do an act so cruel, wicked as you were."

"Last night he came to you with untold treasure and knew you not in your disguise; but I knew you the moment I heard your voice."

"I know that your long hair and beard are false, or else purposely whitened to have you appear old, and that your infirm step is as sumed."

"You cannot deceive me, Ravel, and I know you as you are, in spite of the beard that has grown to your waist since last I saw you, and the long hair that falls adown your back."

"Shave off the one, cut off the other and you are the Ravel of old, the Red Hand of the Sea."

"Now, Ravel, I await to hear your story, your confession, and beware not to utter falsehood to me."

"I know you in all your blackheartedness now, and I have not passed through the torments of perdition the past four years to be frightened now by you, to hold one atom of fear of you."

"I await your confession, Wizard Ravel, or Holy Father, as you may prefer me to call you."

It was a moment before he could command utterance.

In vain did he at first essay to speak, for he could not.

But, by a masterly effort at self-control he at last said, and his voice was not in anger, but low and kindly:

"Cleo, I will tell you—"

"Hold! Cleo the Beautiful is forever dead."

"I am Selah now, Selah the Sea Witch, holy father."

"So be it if you prefer the name, and it were perhaps better thus."

"I will tell you all, and truthfully, of why you find me here."

"You said but now that bad Belmont been upon the schooner, I would not have cast you adrift as I did."

"Your words were true; but my crew forced me to the act, and it was not as you believe my own wish."

"You had thwarted them in many evil acts, and you had let go free one whom I was holding captive for large ransom, and not as you believed because I loved her."

"So the men forced me to get rid of you, and deeply did I sorrow for my act."

"Belmont, my lieutenant, was absent at the time, as you know, carrying a prize into Havana, and when he returned and learned what I had done he at once defied me, called me an accursed man, and told the crew that they would all hang for so sending a woman to death, did they not palliate the crime by punishing me."

"I sprung upon him in a rage, and he hurled me to the deck, for great as my strength is, he is a giant in comparison."

"I attacked him with my cutlass, and he disarmed me, and then ordered a life-boat, a large one we had taken from a clipper ship, gotten ready with sails, provisions and water, and giving to me my share of the booty, and he was honest in it, he had me put into the boat and set adrift upon the seas."

"There were some of the crew who threatened mutiny, but he shot down several of them and cowed them on the spot."

"Away I went upon the sea, alone and with death staring me in the face."

"Yet not so badly did he make you fare, as you did me, Ravel, for you were a man, in a safe boat, with provisions, sails and all."

"I cannot defend myself, Cle—"

"Ah!"

"Selah, I mean, for my act toward you."

"But I went my way, and days after, one afternoon in a calm, came upon this island."

"I landed, to find here yonder cabin, and in the front of it a chapel."

"But the island was deserted, and a wreck upon the other shore, high on a reef, showed me that the vessel had evidently been a missionary ship."

"But not one of her crew was alive, and I supposed that she had been driven on by night in a storm and all on board were swept into the sea, for I found upon the shore a dozen bodies, and among them those of several priests."

"The wreck was a godsend to me, for the ship was stored with provisions, agricultural implements, some goats, fruit trees and seed."

"By a strange coincidence the calm weather lasted for weeks, and so I was enabled to bring the stores ashore, and the day after I had accomplished my task a tornado swept over the island."

"But I had already arranged for the safety of my life-boat, by hauling it up out of the sea, and set to work to make myself comfortable."

"The next day there was not a trace of the ship left other than the wreckage along the reefs."

"And here, Selah, have I lived for five years, alone, and when I saw the schooner heading this way I went to my lookout among the rocks, recognized my own craft, and in fear assumed this disguise and garb, pretending to be a Wizard Priest, and when I called Belmont and Fornesca by name, was it a wonder that they deemed me possessed of powers of necromancy?"

"Now, Selah, you have my story, my confession, and it is known to you, as to me, that within yonder pool are riches far beyond the fortune of a king."

"Yes, I know all," was the low reply of the woman, and somehow her few words caused the man to feel strangely uncomfortable.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WIND WITCH MAKES THE WIZARD'S ISLE.

BELMONT the Buccaneer went on board of the king's cruiser Wind Witch in irons.

But Captain St. George Maybrick was a humane man, and there was something about the prisoner that won his regard, pirate though he was, and when a few days out at sea he sent to have him brought into his cabin one day.

"Sit down, Captain Belmont," he said politely, and as the outlaw expressed his thanks in a courtly bow, he asked:

"Have you been well treated, sir?"

"Yes, Captain Maybrick, as well as I could expect, thank you, sir."

"My orders are to bring you back as the king's guest, that is as mine, in the name of his Majesty, if you get possession of the treasure, and so I will now give you that honor, for, if you have deceived us, it will be easy enough then, when I find it out, to carry out my instructions in such an event."

"To hang me at the yard-arm," said Belmont, with a smile, as though the thought was a pleasant one.

"Exactly."

"Well, Sir George Maybrick, you will not have to hang me on that score, and I thank you for the responsibility you take in extending your hospitality."

"You are welcome to it, I assure you, so consider yonder state-room at your disposal, and you will mess with me in the cabin."

"I will have your irons at once removed, and your luggage brought to your quarters."

This was done, and from that day almost a friendship sprung up between the two men, as far as was possible under existing circumstances of a pirate and a king's officer.

The Wind Witch went bowling swiftly along on her course, whether the breeze was light or strong, and her run into the Caribbean Sea was a remarkably rapid one.

Several vessels gave chase on the voyage, but were quickly dropped out of sight by the fleet brig, for Captain Maybrick's mission was a too important one for him to swerve from his course, or to either fight a foe or capture a prize.

"We will sight the island to-morrow, Captain Maybrick, and now that we are not far away I desire to explain the exact situation to you, sir," said Belmont, as the two sat at dinner one pleasant afternoon, while the brig was skimming swiftly along, with the prospect of reaching their destination upon the following day.

"I shall be glad to understand the situation thoroughly, Captain Belmont," was the reply of the British commander.

"This treasure, sir, as I made known to the king, is worth millions, and when I took it to the island it was to hide it away until I could return for it in a suitable vessel, for its value would enable me to give up piracy, as I intended to do."

"My own vessel was in a wretched condition, badly strained, and I dared not intrust such a valuable cargo on board of her longer than was absolutely necessary."

"I therefore headed for this island."

"Again, I could not enter port in my vessel, while, with a captured merchantman, I could do so and dispose of my treasure, pay my officers and crew and go on separate ways."

"So it was that I sought the island, instead of the retreat where I intended to put the schooner in proper repair to enable me to capture just the prize I needed."

"That I was wise in getting rid of the treasure is proven by the fact that my schooner went down in the very first blow."

"My crew had become greatly lessened from various causes, so that the division of the treasure would enrich us all, and when my schooner sunk it left but two boats' crews to share it, the long-boat with twenty men under my first officer, Fornesca, and the life-boat with twelve men beside myself, and I alone remain, for my crew were hanged, and I have not the slightest idea that Fornesca ever reached the land."

"But if he did, do you not think that ere this he would have returned for the treasure, for that was nearly five months ago?"

"True, Captain Maybrick, and it is just what Fornesca would do, were it not for one important circumstance."

"May I ask what that is?"

"Certainly, sir, for I am about to tell you."

"Were you near any land that he could reach?"

"Yes, sir, a couple of days' sail away, but his boat was not in a condition to stand much hardship, and he failed to prepare for his voyage in an open long-boat, and which might extend into days, or weeks."

"But the circumstance to which I allude is that the island was found to be inhabited."

"And you trusted your treasure there?"

"Yes, Captain Maybrick, for the inhabitant was a hermit, a Wizard Priest, a man fully four-score years of age, feeble and tottering into the grave."

"A Wizard Priest, you say, Belmont?" asked Captain Maybrick with surprise.

"Yes, Sir George, though the words, in the common acceptation of the names would be a paradox."

"But the man had marvelous powers, as you shall hear."

"Fornesca, my first officer, had been wrecked on the island, and remained there several months, so he acted as pilot."

"He reported that the island seemed to be only a rock in the sea, two-score of acres in size, and with rugged, cliff-like coast, and no anchor-age, except for small boats in calm weather."

"The island was surrounded by sunken rocks; but once ashore, and over the rocky walls encircling it, a fertile valley, or basin was to be found, with a small lake, or pool in one end."

"Such was Fornesca's report, and we found it as he had said; but, to his surprise, as well as to us, there was a large cabin in one end, built close in under the rocky cliff."

"We saw no one, so approached, and the door being opened after numerous knocks, this aged hermit, or Wizard Priest appeared, and I saw that the cabin was a chapel, completely fitted up."

"The men came up and knelt there, and the priest, to my amazement, called both Fornesca and myself by name, and told us why we had come, for he seemed to read our very thoughts, thereby giving proof that he was a wizard, as well as a priest."

"To him I told my mission and he said that he would hide the treasure with certain weird rites, and place over it a curse upon the one who should come to take it away, thereby defrauding the others of the crew."

"I see."

"This curse was to be of the most appalling nature man ever listened to, and the men trembled with fear as he uttered it."

"His appearance was remarkable, a human skull surmounting his head, upheld by skeleton hands, forming a crown, and his wand was enough to spread terror to one upon whom it was pointed."

"There was a coffin placed above the treasure, and the ceremony, weird and fearful, was held at midnight, the men kneeling, and into a volume he called a book of judgment, the name of each man was put."

"I tell you, Captain Maybrick, it was terrible, that scene, as the old Wizard Priest went through it, and most startling of all was, a voice above crying out at the end of the service:

"Amen!"

"But whose voice?"

"None of us know, and the Wizard said that he was alone upon the island, but it was doubtless some spirit voice he had summoned to the scene by his Black Art."

"I can hardly believe in such superstitions, Belmont, though many do," said Sir George, thoughtfully.

"Nor did I until I met that man, Sir George, but when we went to our boats, for a storm was rising, and I was anxious to get off-shore with the schooner, a form, a woman's form, with long flowing snow-white hair, appeared upon the cliff and laughed mockingly, and called out that each one of us had it in our heart to come back and defraud our comrades of the treasure, and that she had called up a storm, to strike us with terror, or words with such meaning."

"The men were almost paralyzed with fear, and reaching the schooner we sailed away, to have to take to our boats some days later, as I have said."

"You are a skillful seaman, Captain Belmont, so I am sure did all you could to save your vessel?"

"Yes, sir, but it was impossible, and the men attributed it to the old witch, for she called herself Selah, the Sea Witch."

"Strange, and the Wizard Priest said nothing of her?"

"Not a word, sir; but it is his curse, and the Sea Witch, that will prevent Fornesca, if alive, from going to the island to rob us of the treasure."

"And you?"

The pirate started at the sudden question; but answered:

"I am, or was the chief, and held the greater claim upon all, while I believe, Captain Maybrick, that I am the only one of those on the island that awful night, who is now alive."

"It is to be hoped so, and I could almost hope

that the Wizard Priest and the Sea Witch were also dead."

"I indorse that hope, sir," was the answer, and both men seemed impressed by the conversation they had had.

The next day the Wind Witch arrived off the Wizard's Isle and dropped anchor, for the weather was mild, so that there was no danger on that score to the brig.

CHAPTER XII.

A MYSTERY OF THE SEA.

WITH all the pressure upon him of a war with his American Colonies, and having to battle with other powers, nearer home, the British king was not allowed to lose sight of the Silver Ship, for the wildest kind of rumors were afloat about the vessel which he had sent after the pirate treasure to the Caribbean Sea.

Not a vessel came in from a long voyage in the Gulf of Mexico, and along the Atlantic Coast, but brought strange stories of this phenomenon of the sea, the Wind Witch sailing the ocean with a skeleton crew.

Cruisers had given chase to her, and as well might they have chased the wind itself, as its namesake the Wind Witch, which could run away from them with an ease that could only be done by a craft guided by supernatural powers.

The king was far more fretted than he cared to show, for outside of the lost treasure, which he had hoped and expected to get possession of, there was the loss of his fine yacht and the money he had spent lavishly in fitting her out for her strange voyage.

Then there was the king's favorite, St. George Maybrick in command of the missing vessel, with other gallant officers and a crew of picked British tars.

They were also looked upon as lost.

Had the pirate, Belmont, but planned the destruction of the brig, with his story of a buried treasure?

But then the puzzling part of the affair was that the Wind Witch was not lost, for she was afloat; but how?

The weird, unsightly crew that were upon her decks certainly kept her from capture by the cruisers, and held her aloof from all vessels that sighted her upon the high seas.

What could be the reason, what horrible mystery was at the bottom of the brig's cruising the seas an appalling havenless cruiser.

At first the idea had filled the king's mind, when suggested by an enemy to St. George Maybrick, that the young captain had appropriated the treasure and run off with the brig.

"Perhaps he has turned pirate," had suggested this enemy.

But the king hastily dismissed this thought, when not a single charge of lawlessness was laid against the brig.

She ran from all vessels whose path she crossed, and not a shot had she ever fired, and even crafts with rich cargoes, which could have fallen an easy prey to the fleet Wind Witch, had passed them at sea, their captains reporting that she had fled from them.

Cruisers that had been near enough to fire upon her had noted that their shots did no apparent damages, and men who had heard of her once could never be prevailed to man the guns to open fire upon her a second time.

So it was that the Wind Witch remained to the king, and to those who followed the waters, a mystery of the sea.

The form of this sea mystery also spread across the ocean, and along the Atlantic shores was the talk of seamen and landsmen alike.

Pirate craft, though thick upon the seas, were almost forgotten in this mysterious cruiser, and men crossing the ocean, and sailing along its shores, seemed to dread more a meeting with this strange vessel, than with a buccaneer.

The war was now under full headway between the Colonies and the mother country, and privateers flying the new flag of the Americans were seen the seas over, while the vessels-of-war under the British ensign could be counted by the scores, from Maine to Mexico, and far out upon the Atlantic.

Taking advantage of the war in America, and the disturbances in Europe, the buccaneers became more bold and numerous, and to go to sea required a great deal of courage, so numerous and terrible were the dangers to be encountered.

Such was the situation of affairs when a cruiser flying the British ensign came in past Boston Light one afternoon and headed up the bay for an anchorage.

The cruiser was a brig-of-war, and her flag was half-masted, while she presented every appearance of having been upon a long and severe voyage.

Her topmasts were housed, and her sails torn and patched, while her entire appearance was weather-worn and stained, and shot-marks were visible in bulwarks and rigging.

Upon her quarter-deck were several young officers in the uniform of midshipmen, and one wearing the rank of a junior lieutenant; but

there was one who paced the deck, a glass under his arm, who bore no insignia of rank, yet appeared to be in command of the brig.

His face was a study for an artist, seeking fearlessness, nobility of nature and resolution, while his form, in the garb of a common sailor though it was, was athletic, elegant and his step that of one born to command.

Presently a midshipman approached the young sailor, who, in spite of the appearance on deck of officers in uniform, was in command of the brig, and with a forced salute, for it seemed to go against his will to make the salutation, said:

"Mr. Stanwood, the captain's compliments and he desires to see you in his cabin."

"Lieutenant Caldwell, Captain Kane desires to see me in the cabin, sir, so please take the deck," and the seaman moved toward the cabin.

Lieutenant Caspar Caldwell looked like a man lately risen from an invalid's bed, for he was pale and his face haggard.

He bowed simply, making no reply, and the seaman entered the cabin.

Captain Kane, a man of fifty, and a typical British sailor, sat in an easy-chair, with one leg resting upon a bench, for he was suffering from a severe wound which had kept him for long weeks below decks, and his face was pinched with long suffering.

"Sit down, Stanwood, for I wish to have a talk with you."

The sailor bowed and remained standing.

"We have passed Boston Light, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, and by nightfall will anchor off the city."

"Stanwood, it is useless for me to say that I regret exceedingly what has transpired on this cruise, and that act of yours allowed you to place your neck, as it were, in a noose."

"Captain Kane, it was not my act, sir, that placed the noose about my neck, but the fact that an officer of this brig, as you well know the senior lieutenant, exhibited a lady's minature to his brother officers upon the quarter-deck, and made an assertion regarding her that I knew to be false.

"Though acting as a warrant officer, the boatswain, I resented his words, and the result is known to you."

"Alas, but too well; but it is your safety I look to, and desire.

"As we lost so heavily in our engagement with that Peruvian pirate, and you had already shown yourself capable of commanding the vessel, I was forced to take you out of irons, and place you in command, for Lord Erskine was wounded and Lieutenant Caldwell was not able to assume command, as you know, nor a single midshipman upon this vessel.

"You saved the brig that night by your masterly seamanship, and twice before we owe it to you that this vessel was not lost, and upon these facts I have laid much stress in my report to the admiral in charge, hoping that it will palliate your act against Lieutenant Sir Bradwyn Brule.

"But, unfortunately for yourself, Stanwood, you are an American—"

"Pardon me, Captain Kane, but I do not consider it a misfortune to be an American."

"We will not discuss that matter, sir; but it so stands that you are, and as we received news from the wrecked boat's crew we picked up, that war was going on between England and her Colonies, the fact that you are an American will work against you in your trial, and I very much fear me that death will be your sentence—death at the yard-arm.

"It has been hinted to me by some of my officers, that you left America, on board of a vessel bound to South America, for reasons you cared not to name, and if so, you will be held also responsible for any act you may have committed in the Colonies before your departure, and this will be held against you, and your past career fully investigated, you may be sure.

"I mention this, Stanwood, to show you that I believe you have little hope, once you have reached Boston, and, as you are now in command of the brig, my secret order to you is to use it to make your escape, once you have dropped anchor.

"You are a superb swimmer, so, if you see no way of going ashore in a boat, slip overboard and swim to the land, for the crew are your friends to a man, and not one will report you, while the officers will do so.

"I will send Lieutenant Caldwell ashore, with a request for officers to be sent out to me at once, and you will remain in command until their arrival, so make the best of your chance, Stanwood, and my good wishes attend you."

"Captain Kane, I feel your kindness deeply, sir, and appreciate all you have said and done for me."

"But, sir, I shipped on board this brig as a common seaman, and even as such I would not desert her."

"The past few weeks, in the absence of competent officers, I have been in command, and until relieved by your order, will so remain, and certainly I shall not desert my post holding such rank, though it be temporary."

"No, I will remain and face my accusers, and stand by the alternative be it what it may," and with a salute the young sailor returned to the deck.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE YOUNG SAILOR.

In what was then the aristocratic part of the city of Boston, a century ago, there were two handsome old homesteads, the lands of which joined, and that they were the homes of wealthy and refined people all about them indicated.

The one was the home of an American, who held a high official position under the king, an austere, dignified man whom his equals even stood in great awe of, and who wore the look of a man who had had some deep sorrow in life.

Instead of softening his nature it had hardened, and he had become cynical and severe in his contact with his fellow-men.

A man of fifty, he was handsome and well preserved, a striking-looking personage with his curling white hair and mustache, for he affected the French style of mustaches, then seldom worn in England and the Colonies.

In his earlier life he had been known, from his elegant style of dress and dashing manner as "Prince Paul Revere," and many were the maidens who had sought to catch the handsome young aristocrat.

But Paul Revere loved a fair maiden, the daughter of his next door neighbor, Commodore Noel, although he knew that he was only "second choice" in the heart of pretty Ethel Noel, who was engaged to a young American, captain of a West Indian trader, and a dashing, splendid sailor withal.

One day Captain Stanwood, for such was his name, sailed for the West Indies, in his fleet schooner, and it was upon his return he was to marry Ethel Noel, it was said.

But the day set for his return came, and his schooner, ever most punctual, failed to appear.

Days, weeks, and months went by, but he did not return, and so was given up for lost, and after a year and more had gone by, urged by "Prince Paul," and her parents, too, Ethel consented to become his wife.

The day was set for their marriage, and though Prince Paul seemed most happy, the beautiful face of the once joyous Ethel had become saddened, for she still mourned for the one love of her heart, Stacey Stanwood.

The wedding night came around, and the guests had assembled in the grand parlors, the clergyman stood, prayer-book in hand, awaiting the coming of the couple to be united, when suddenly there entered the room no less a personage than the long-lost captain, Stacey Stanwood.

Ethel Noel gave a cry of joy, and sprang toward him with the words:

"Thank God, my prayers are answered, and you have come back to me!"

Prince Paul Revere turned livid, and stepped toward her, but was confronted by Captain Stanwood in a handsome sailor suit, and looking his very best.

"Pardon me, Prince Paul Revere, but I have the prior claim to this lady's hand, and I am sure that you will be the last man to dispute my right."

The words were distinctly uttered, and with an emphasis upon the last part of the sentence that was significant of a threat, some thought.

The eyes of the two young men met, and what Paul Revere read in those of his rival caused him to bow, and then, acting from sudden impulse, to take the hand of Ethel Noel and place it in that of Stacey Stanwood, with the remark:

"Take her, and may you be happy."

"Just like Prince Paul," all said, and it was. But he left the mansion immediately, and the next day had departed from the town.

It was five years before his return, and then he came back to claim his inheritance, for his father had died, and he came not alone, but brought with him a dark-faced Cuban beauty as his bride.

His Cuban wife had died soon after the birth of her little daughter, Pearl, and the wee infant became the idol of her father's heart.

And in the adjoining house dwelt Captain Stanwood and his wife, with their two children, Noel and Ethel, and happiness seemed to rest upon them all.

Between the Reveres and the Stanwoods only a cool friendship existed, the two gentlemen hardly more than speaking when they would meet, and neither ever crossing the other's threshold.

But from the time when little Pearl, just the age of Ethel, was attacked by a savage dog belonging to her father, and rescued by Noel Stanwood, then in his tenth year, and though severely bitten himself, clung to the brute until the nurse had dragged her charge away to safety, a childish friendship had sprung up between the three children, who often met each other at the locked iron gate in the garden, which was in the olden time open between the grounds of the two homesteads.

Whether little Pearl, at her tender age, loved her boy hero, six years her senior, I cannot say; but she certainly was never won from him by her many lovers as she grew older, and he, too, always acknowledged to his sister Ethel that Pearl was the only sweetheart he would ever have through life.

As years went on, Captain Stanwood, a man of superior education, took his son Noel to sea with him, and taught him each day in his cabin, while he also gave him the chance to learn seamanship, the result of which was that the youth grew up to be a splendid sailor, and also had learned much of books, men, and the world as well.

His father would take command of different vessels each year, for old Mr. Noel having been a shipping merchant, had left his daughter his fortune, which consisted of several fine vessels trading in different parts of the world.

So it was that Noel had seen foreign lands, and so skilled had he become as a seaman, that he had been, though under twenty years of age, first mate of several vessels in succession under his father's command.

As his business had increased, Captain Stanwood had taken into partnership with him, to manage affairs ashore, one Frank Farley, also an old admirer of his wife when she was a young girl.

With perfect trust in Frank Farley, he had placed in his hands full powers as office partner, and held him to no account of his stewardship, so long as fortune seemed smiling upon their affairs.

One day a fine new brig set sail with Noel Stanwood as captain, for his father felt assured that he was as fully competent to command a vessel as himself, and had often told him that he was a "born sailor."

The brig's destination was to Peru, a long and dangerous voyage in those days, and yet the young captain made a successful run of it, and sailed into the harbor one night with joy at his return, and that he could tell his father how great was the financial profits of the trip.

He at once went to the house, and at the door the old servant who let him in and recognized him, said sadly:

"Ah, young Master Noel, it's a sad home you come to, sir."

"Quick, Bennett, tell me what has happened," cried the young sailor, grasping the arm of the butler, who with his wife had been in the Noel family for two generations.

"Your father is dead, my poor Master Noel, and the fortune he thought to have, sir, is not to be found.

"Mr. Farley is in the library now, sir, explaining it all to your mother and Miss Ethel, but it's the poor captain they mourn for, sir, and not the lost money."

"My father dead?" and Noel Stanwood stood like one dealt a terrible blow that had stunned him.

"Yes, sir, the clipper came home, sir, under the first mate, and he reported that your father was taken ill at sea, sir, and died after a few weeks' illness."

"This is terrible! My poor mother and sister!" he said, with deep emotion, and then added:

"Go and break the news of my coming as gently as possible, good Bennett, and I will follow you soon," and he turned away from the door and brushed a tear from his eyes, for his father had been devotedly loved by the young sailor, who knew him to be all that was noble, good and brave, and had made him his model of what he deemed a perfect man.

CHAPTER XIV.

A LOST FORTUNE.

CAPTAIN STACEY STANWOOD had been three months in his grave at the bottom of the sea, and seated in the library of Stone Manor, as the homestead was called, were Noel, his mother and sister, listening to the report of Frank Farley, of the shipping house of Stanwood & Farley, of how matters stood with the firm.

The junior partner, whom Captain Stanwood had taken into partnership with him, was a sleek-faced man of forty two or three years of age, and certainly an excellent business man.

What he had put into the firm was marked on the books, which he kept himself, as twenty-five thousand dollars in cash, though many wondered, who knew his antecedents, where he got that sum of money from. He had the co-partnership papers, the receipt of Captain Stanwood for the twenty-five thousand dollars, and his books showed that the firm had made money, but private investments made by the senior partner had in every case turned out badly.

The result of these speculations were, so Mr. Farley stated, to swamp the firm when the debts were paid, and to leave for the heirs of the captain only a few thousand dollars.

"Had Captain Stanwood lived, all would have gone well, and we might have recovered the losses he had made; but his death brought on the climax to our business, and I was compelled to show just how matters stood, and in paying the debts of the firm drew upon his property as well as my own, while having mortgaged his home and other property, it was forced to go."

"Fortunately, I have not, being a bachelor, been extravagant, and speculations I entered into have been most successful, so I bought in Stone Manor, and wish you, Mrs. Stanwood and Miss Ethel, to still continue to make it your

home, while you, Noel, I can send out as captain of an East Indian trader, a fine clipper ship," said Mr. Farley, with a bland smile.

"Thank you, sir, but without consulting my mother in this affair, I believe that she and my sister feel as I do, that we do not wish to accept charity, even from my father's late successful partner."

"My father being dead, his lips are forever silenced as to his affairs and his unfortunate speculations; but as there are a few thousands coming to us—for so you said, I believe?"

"Yes, three thousand three hundred to a penny."

"Very well, that will purchase a small cottage for my mother and sister, and furnish it with certain comforts, while I can readily secure the captaincy of some craft trading nearer home than the East Indies, and we will not be in such bad circumstances after all, you see, Mr. Farley."

The merchant winced under the cool way of accepting the situation, for he had hoped to be the one to extend a helping hand, and he turned to Mrs. Stanwood to urge against agreeing to the plans of her son, and said:

"But, my dear madam, you have been raised to every luxury, and must consider this home your own, as long as you please to dwell here, you and Miss Ethel."

"Thank you, no, Mr. Farley, my son has decided best, and we will give you possession of your house within two weeks from to-day," was the widow's response.

"Surely, Miss Ethel, you will urge against this—"

"No, Mr. Farley, I am glad that brother decided as he has done, and we will be far happier in our own little home, no matter how humble, than in dwelling here upon your charity," said Ethel earnestly.

"I am sorry, very sorry," said Mr. Farley, anxious to hide his chagrin at the determination the Stanwoods had come to.

The very next day Ned Stanwood sought for and found a cottage fronting the bay, a cosey, pretty little house, with a flower garden and an acre of ground attached, and before the time Mrs. Stanwood had said they were domiciled in their new home, with old Bennett and Lucy his wife in a small cot near, still determined to serve those in whose service they had grown gray and managed to save up a few thousands, the interest on which would take care of them in their old age.

As for Noel, though cut by all of his aristocratic friends in his poverty, he found no trouble in securing the skipper's berth upon a schooner trading between Boston and the Carolinas, and soon started upon his first voyage since his come down in life from a supposed heir to a large fortune to one who had to work for the support of those whom he so dearly loved.

The run to the Carolinas was quickly made, and upon preparing to start upon his return, he found a sergeant of marines and sixteen soldiers who wished to take passage with him to Boston, having been left by the British cruiser to which they belonged sailing suddenly while they were ashore.

Though it would crowd his little craft, he decided to take them, as the pay offered was liberal, and before the vessel had been one day out a wreck was sighted upon which were found a dozen British tars.

Their vessel was sinking, and their boats had been washed away; but though the sea was running high, Stanwood went himself in the yawl after them and brought them in safety on board.

The captain wished to bring a case of muskets along also, which he had purchased with his own money for a planter, and was not able to lose, and the young skipper granted the request, and glad was he afterward to do so.

The schooner was now crowded terribly, having, with the marines, the wrecked crew and her own men, forty-five all told on board, and sail was crowded on to make the run as quickly as possible.

When dawn broke the following morning, Noel Stanwood, who had the deck, discovered a sail not far off.

The wind was light, and a glance showed him that the craft was an armed schooner, and had the appearance of being a fleet sailor.

A closer observation revealed to him the fact that the craft was a pirate who had chased other vessels he had been on, on several separate occasions.

"She is fast, and will overtake us, and—By Neptune! but I'll try it, for it is our only chance," and he turned to his first mate and gave orders that not over two men should show themselves on deck at one time.

Sail was then piled upon the schooner, and she began her flight, hoping she might escape before being seen.

But vain the hope, for the stranger quickly started in chase, and the glass showed her decks crowded with men.

"We are gone, captain, for she walks after at two knots to our one," said the mate, dolefully.

"Yes, and in half an hour will pick us up."

"Hold the deck while I go below," and Noel

Stanwood sought the captain he had taken from the wreck and the sergeant.

"There is a pirate in chase of us, and I know him, for it is the schooner of the outlaw they call the Crimson Captain, on account of his red deeds."

"Now, sergeant, you and your marines, seventeen in all, are well armed with muskets, and, captain, you and your men number thirteen, and you have those two cases of muskets I brought aboard for you—twenty-four you said?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have fourteen men, and several muskets and some cutlasses and pistol, so we will be, all told, forty-five well-armed men, and when the Crimson Captain thinks he has caught a lamb, I'll give the signal and he'll find he has entrapp'd a wolf."

"But how many men has he, sir?" asked the sergeant.

"I neither know, nor care, for if he has a hundred our surprise will be worth his odds in numbers, and I'll fight my ship before I surrender, for the Crimson Captain shows no mercy."

"Now arm your men, both of you, and I'll have mine ready, and will report to you just what is going on, and when I wish your aid."

Had the sergeant and merchant captain wished to object they saw that it would be useless, so they yielded gracefully, and Noel Stanwood returned on deck to find the pirate gaining rapidly and preparing to fire upon the chase.

CHAPTER XV.

A WOLF IN LAMB'S WOOL.

UPON returning to the deck the young captain found the pirate schooner not a mile away and coming on under a pressure of canvas that brought her along with a huge white bone in her teeth, as the sunny wave pushed ahead from the bows of a swiftly sailing vessel is called in nautical parlance.

To his mate he told his plan, and it was readily acquiesced in, and passing among his crew he told them just what he expected of them.

His own weapons on the schooner were then gotten ready, and as he felt prepared for the fight he had determined upon, a puff of smoke burst from the pirates bows and a shot came flying over the schooner.

But Noel Stanwood calmly held on.

He had been under fire quite often before, in his cruises, and fear was unknown to him.

A second shot came nearer, yet he gave no order to his helmsman, and so his schooner never swerved.

The pirate was gaining rapidly, for the pursuer was a very fleet sailer, the chase also possessing good qualities for going, and Stanwood knew that in a short while more he would have to come to, to save his vessel, which he did not wish crippled.

He however risked a dozen more shots, and as he saw the pirate wearing for a broadside he suddenly gave the order to come to.

He got the broadside, but the quick command of Stanwood brought the schooner partially out of range, and little damage was done, more than to kill one man and wound two more slightly.

The pirate ran down now, and just as Stanwood had expected and hoped he would do, in the quiet sea and with a light breeze, determined to board by laying his vessel alongside, instead of sending boats.

"Stand by, men, for our time will soon come," said Stanwood coolly, and he placed his men just where they could come at his call.

"Schooner ahoy! what schooner is that?" shouted a hoarse voice from the pirate's deck.

"The Thistle of Boston," responded the young skipper.

"Where from, what is your cargo, and how many in crew have you?"

"A cargo of cotton, out of Charleston, and I had fourteen in crew, but your fire lessened the number."

"Ay, ay, it was well for you that I did not sink you for your stubbornness."

"Stand by to wake fast, for I shall run alongside and board you."

"What cannot be helped, sir, must be endured; but what craft is that?"

"The Red Shark, Captain Crimson, the Buccaneer."

"A pirate! Heaven have mercy!" cried Stanwood in well-feigned alarm, and a laugh was heard upon the enemy at his supposed terror, while the black flag was hoisted to the peak.

"All ready, men, when I give the word," coolly said Stanwood, under his breath, and a moment after the pirate schooner, under shortened sail, glided alongside.

Grapnels were thrown fore and aft, and when the Crimson Captain, cutlass in hand, sprung upon board the American, he was followed by two-score of his crew.

"Fire!" shouted Stanwood, in a voice of thunder, and up rose the ambushed men from hatches, caboose, forecastle and cabin, and poured in a deadly volley upon the amazed pirates.

"Boarders follow me!" roared Stanwood, and with a sweep of his cutlass, he disarmed the pirate captain, while he shot dead an outlaw lieutenant with his pistol almost at the same instant.

Springing upon the bulwarks he leaped upon the pirate decks, and, followed by the marines at a charge bayonets, he drove the amazed and panic-stricken outlaws before him until they leaped into the sea to escape death.

In the mean time the merchant captain and his men had thrown themselves upon the pirates who had boarded the Thistle, and half of whom had fallen under the first volley, and a desperate combat, hand to hand, was going on, with the chances in favor of the outlaws.

But Stanwood lost no time in taking half of the marines and several of his own men back to the rescue, and the pirates were forced backward and soon began to cry for quarter.

In the madness of battle it was some time before the cry was listened to, and not until Stanwood forced his men to show quarter when it was asked.

Then the pirates had been terribly thinned out, their captain was wounded and a prisoner, and those who surrendered were more or less severely hurt.

The crew under the young skipper had by no means escaped unscathed, for half a dozen dead lay upon the decks, and more than double that number were wounded, Stanwood himself having received a bullet in his shoulder and a cut from a cutlass on his head, though neither was serious.

The schooner had been taken, and with her heavy armament and plunder was a valuable prize.

Placing the merchant skipper in command of his own schooner Stanwood boarded the prize with his own men and half of the marines, and the two vessels spread sail for Boston.

Without other adventures they arrived, and the young sailor reported to the admiral commanding of the king's forces in Boston his capture, and surrendered his prisoners and the prize, and at once the city rung with the name of the gallant hero.

Having left all on board his own schooner in shipshape condition, he went to his little home, proud of his achievement, and was received with a most affectionate greeting by his mother and sister, as well as by old Bennett and Lucy.

But the young sailor saw that something was wrong, and as neither his mother or Ethel would speak, he took the first opportunity to talk with old Bennett.

"Bennett, something has gone wrong at home in the three months that I have been away, and neither my mother or sister will tell me, so I come to you."

"And glad am I, sir, to tell you, for you should know."

"Do you know, Master Noel, that I believe that man Farley ruined your father, or rather got hold of his fortune, for he's a rascal?"

"I half-believed so, Bennett, but had no proof, and as he always professed great friendship, I could not act without being sure."

"He's a villain, sir, and more, he's been trying to force Miss Ethel to marry him, sir, and it's through threatening terrible things against you, sir—But, oh Lud! how fearful angry your eyes look, Master Noel, and—oh, sir, don't look that way, for he hain't worth it!"

"Be calm, Master Noel, I beg of you."

"I am perfectly calm, my good Bennett; but that is old Farley's game, is it?" and the young sailor spoke with the most perfect calmness.

"Yes, sir; but he's away just now, sir, in New York, but is to be back within a few weeks."

"That will be before I sail again, so I will have a chance to square accounts with Farley."

"Oh, sir, he has made all kinds of threats if Miss Ethel did not marry him by Christmas, and if you go away again, I do believe he will frighten her into becoming his wife."

"My sister will never marry Frank Farley, good Bennett," and the look in the face of the sailor convinced the old man that there were breakers ahead for Merchant Farley.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FAIR FRIEND.

WHEN the downfall from riches and an elegant home, to an humble cottage, came upon the Stanwoods, both "Prince" Paul Revere and his daughter Pearl were away from the city, visiting relatives in Maryland.

It was really a shock to return home and find that a great change had come upon the Stanwoods, that the captain was dead, and their fortune swept from them.

Finding exactly how the situation was the beautiful girl said to her father, the morning after their arrival:

"Father, I am aware that in your past life there was something between the Stanwoods and yourself, which has left a deep impression in your heart; and that though on speaking terms you and they have never been really friends."

"You know what I owe Captain Noel Stanwood, and now I bear that his father is dead, their family swept away and they are living in a little house overlooking the harbor, bought with the little left of their riches."

"Captain Noel is acting as a skipper on a schooner trading with the Carolinas, and I wish

The Silver Ship.

to go and see Mrs. Stanwood and Ethel, and extend my sympathy and any aid I can, but I wish your consent, father."

"You have it, my child, and I regret that aught has occurred to mar the happiness of Mrs. Stanwood and her children, and you have my word for it that I will do aught that you may desire for their aile."

"Dear, good father, I will go at once, and at dinner you will know the result."

And ordering the carriage Pearl drove to the humble, but pretty little cottage, and was met by Ethel and her mother with an affectionate greeting.

"I really believe I like this little house better than the old homestead, and Captain Noel will soon make riches for you," she said in her frank, sweet way.

She asked boldly of how they were left, and said her father was anxious to do all in his power to make them comfortable, and that they must take her meddling in their affairs in the spirit in which it was intended.

And they did, and told her just how it all had come about, and that they had bought their little home, while Bennett and his wife also had purchased a lot near them and still insisted upon serving them, the old man looking to the garden and cow, and his wife to the cooking.

"Mamma cares for the chickens, while I care for the house and the flowers, so we are busy, as you see, Pearl, and we have still some hundreds of pounds in the bank, and, but for poor papa's death and Noel being away, we could be even happier here than at Stone Hall," said Ethel, cheerily, and Mrs. Stanwood seemed to have imbibed her daughter's spirit.

A week after Prince Paul called with Pearl, and though the meeting between Mrs. Stanwood and himself was constrained, it soon passed off.

This was the first time since the night of her marriage, that she had more than spoken to Mr. Revere, in acknowledgment of his customary frigid bow.

Now the ice was broken, and it promised that the break in their friendship for twenty-five years would be ended.

Several weeks after the visit of Prince Paul with Pearl to the cottage, the schooner Thistle put into Boston Harbor with the pirate craft Red Shark a prize, and the name of Noel Stanwood was upon every lip.

The admiral at once took the schooner as a craft to be fitted out as a Government cruiser when she should be changed into a brig rig, and the prize-money when divided among Stanwood, his crew and allies, gave to him about a thousand pounds, quite a little sum in those days, and which he hastened to deposit in bank subject to his mother's and sister's use when needed.

The story of his gallant capture was told in the city papers, and the sergeant and merchant captain, with the Thistle's mate had given their version of the affair, and delighted with the prize-money they had received through Noel's pluck, they could not speak too highly in his praise, and he was pointed out when on the streets as a hero of heroes, and the young skipper who took Captain Crimson and his pirate schooner with a force not half as large as that of the outlaws and without a piece of cannon upon his own trading-craft.

When Frank Farley heard of the affair upon his return to Boston, he at once decided to seek Noel and congratulate him upon the gallant capture.

So he spruced himself up in his best clothes and late in the afternoon called at the cottage.

Mrs. Stanwood had gone into the town shopping, so said old Lucy, and Captain Noel was down at the schooner getting his traps, for he had another command, a better one offered to him, on a vessel that was to sail at once for South America.

"And Miss Ethel?" asked Mr. Farley.

"Is in the grove of cedars yonder," and Lucy pointed to a pretty point of lookout, a favorite resort with Ethel.

But she did not say that Ethel was not alone, but had company.

The company was Pearl Revere, who had walked apart from her friend, who was sketching the view of the harbor from the point, and was engaged in gathering wild flowers some distance away.

So Ethel was alone when Frank Farley arrived, and bearing his step she supposed that it was Pearl, and started and paled as she saw who it really was.

"Ah, sweet Ethel, I am glad to find you alone, for I must ask now a response to my demand for your heart and hand."

"Your brother has returned, I hear, and has made quite a reputation from capturing some buccaneer craft, but he cannot expect much prize-money, and what he does get will be kept out for a long time."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Farley, for the Government purchased the buccaneer craft and her armament, and Noel already has received the prize-money, a very handsome sum, too, and we are no longer so poor, so I will not have to do what I half-way promised you, sacrifice myself to get back our home for poor mamma, and a hip for my brother."

"Sacrifice yourself, Ethel Stanwood?" asked the merchant, in an injured tone.

"So I said, Mr. Farley, and it certainly would be a sacrifice, for you are, I believe, two years the senior of my mother, and I do not love you in the slightest degree."

"I am but forty-four, Ethel, and ladies have said not an ill-shapen or ill-favored man."

"I am a gentleman, possess an education, and certainly possess a very large fortune, and I tell you, now, girl, that I will have no nonsense about your love talk and all that, for you must become my wife."

"Sir! Mr. Farley!"

"Oh, it will not do for you to draw yourself up and put on airs, for I can lower your proud head, did I but make known the secret about your father's financial transactions, which I have shielded from the world."

"I love you, and I say you must be my wife, and you shall kiss me now to seal the pledge between us."

The love-mad fool, as he spoke, sprung forward to grasp her in his arms, when a form, unseen approaching before by either himself or Ethel, leaped forward with an angry cry, and, seizing the insulter by the throat, hurled him to the ground with a force that was terrible.

"Oh, brother, you have killed him!" cried Ethel, in terror.

"He dared to attempt to pollute your lips with a kiss— Ha! I believe I have killed him, for his head struck that rock."

"My God! he is all-powerful, and you will be shown no mercy."

"Fly, Noel, fly for your life!" and Pearl Revere, who had heard and seen all from a short distance away, rushed up and grasped his arm.

"Yes, brother, fly, or they will hang you!" pleaded Ethel.

"But why should I fly, for daring to resent an insult to my sister?"

"He is all-powerful in his influence with the British, and you are an American, so go, I implore you, for see, he surely is dead—go if you love me, Noel," cried Ethel, pleadingly.

The young sailor started at her earnest words, and then bent over the prostrate, motionless form.

"His head struck this rock, and I believe he is dead."

"I will go, Pearl, as you ask it, and also Ethel, and I am all ready to sail at once as skipper of yonder barque which I have shipped on to take to Monte Video for the Government there."

"I can sail at once; but do I go, Pearl, with the pledge that I may claim your heart now, and your hand in the future?"

"Yes, gladly, but oh, Noel, go now, and at once."

"And this man's body?"

"I will see to that after your vessel sails—go!"

He took her in his arms and kissed her farewell, and then his sister, and with a farewell left for his mother with Ethel, strode toward the cottage, got his traps and went rapidly down toward the town.

The two maidens drew apart from the form of the merchant, and there stood trembling and pale, until they saw a shore boat put off for the barque, which at once let fall her sails, got up her anchor and started seaward.

They watched her until she had swept by Castle Island, and was heading for the channel that would carry her near Nick's Mate, where she would have a fair, stiff breeze right out to sea.

Then they turned to face the ordeal before them, and report the death of the popular merchant, Frank Farley, at the hands of Noel Stanwood, who was already beyond pursuit, and chance of capture, they devoutly hoped.

CHAPTER XVII.

OVERMATCHED.

"OH, PEARL, what a terrible thing for poor brother Noel, to have to fly for his life."

"But we must do our duty," said Ethel, as she turned to her friend, when the swiftly-flying barque, bearing the fugitive, was seen to be going rapidly away from all pursuit.

"Yes, we must do our duty, Ethel, now that Noel is gone."

"The man deserved severe punishment, for his insult to you, but Noel meant not to kill him; but he is so strong that, in his anger, he buried him from him more violently than he intended."

"I shall go and tell my father all, and have him report it to the authorities, while Bennett can remain with the body until it is sent for."

"It is terrible, Ethel, but then Noel is safe."

"Yes, and but for you, Pearl, he would never have gone."

"I am glad to feel that he did so for my sake; but it was fortunate that he was given command of the barque, with orders to sail at once."

"When will we see him again?" and the tears came into the beautiful eyes of Pearl Revere.

Ethel was about to say that she hoped soon, within half a year, for she had abiding faith in her brother, when instead of uttering the words, she gave a startled cry and said:

"Oh, Pearl! see there!"

But Pearl's eyes were already upon the object at which Ethel gazed with staring eyes.

And certainly it was not a pleasant sight for maidens' eyes, a pallid face, the hue of a corpse, rendered even more ghastly by the blood-stains upon it, and the form of Frank Farley in a sitting posture, gazing upon them with wondering eyes, a dazed expression in fact.

For over an hour he had lain there, while they watched the flight of Noel Stanwood.

The blow had been a severe one, where his head had struck the edge of a rock, and completely stunned him.

But it had cut the scalp to the bone, and the bleeding had revived him, though very slowly.

He rubbed his hands over his head in a dazed kind of a way, and then over his face, and at last gathered strength enough to rise to a sitting posture.

He seemed to have no definite aim at first, and so sat for a long while, until the hum of voices gradually fell upon his ears, and his eyes at length fell upon the forms of the two girls standing sixty feet away from him.

He attempted to rise, but was too weak, and so sat for some time regarding them, while reason came back and he recalled the scene in which he had been lately an actor.

"Ah! he gave me that blow, and it well-nigh ended my life."

"He shall suffer for that, so he shall."

Just then the eyes of Ethel Stanwood fell upon him, and when Pearl saw him also she stepped quickly forward, nerved to some hidden purpose.

"Mr. Farley, I am glad to see that you were not, as we all believed, killed by your fall."

"Knowing your influence, and believing you to be dead, I urged Captain Stanwood to fly, as I felt that he would suffer the penalty should he remain, and he is the only support now of his poor mother and sister."

"He already had orders to depart, as captain of a barque purchased by a South American Government, so he is well out of reach, and you can afford to be lenient in this affair."

"He sought to kill me, Miss Revere; he struck me with a stone, this is the gash, because I honored his sister by the offer of my hand."

"But for me they would be paupers, Miss Revere."

"Pardon me, sir, if I say that many people believe that but for you the Stanwoods would be very rich, as you are, while they are poor."

"As for Captain Stanwood striking you with a stone, it is false, for I stood yonder and heard and saw all, and he gave you a merited punishment."

"Now you struck your head against that stone, in falling, and it stunned you, and cut that gash, which I advise you to have looked to as soon as possible, and I will send you to your home in my carriage, which I see has just come for me."

"And more, Mr. Farley, it will look better for you to state that in falling you cut your head on a stone, than to report about town that you were knocked down by Captain Stanwood for insulting his sister in a most shameful manner."

"Please remember that I witnessed the whole affair, and I will tell the truth if you deem it best to report that you owe your injury to Captain Stanwood."

"Do you not think my advice good, my dear Mr. Farley?"

Ethel was fairly amazed at the spirit and coolness of Pearl, who faced the man with fearlessness and gave him advice with the air of one who intended it should be followed.

As for Frank Farley he was simply bewildered at the bold stand of the young girl.

Prince Paul Revere was a man of more influence in the land than was any other American he could recall, and his house was the resort of the British officers of high rank.

He was rich, very rich, and it was a well-known fact that Pearl could have the title of "My Lady" whenever she chose to select one of a dozen chances laid at her feet.

If Pearl hinted that there were those who believed he, Frank Farley, was suspected of defrauding the Stanwoods, such rumors must be afloat, though they had never reached his ears, and did he report that Noel Stanwood had given him his injury, attempting to kill him, he knew that Pearl's story of the affair would be taken against his own, and would reflect no credit upon himself.

So it was that Frank Farley wisely decided to take Pearl's advice, and he said:

"My dear Miss Revere, I was wrong, and I made a fool of myself, and it seems that Noel Stanwood thought it worse than it was, and coming up behind me, struck me, and so we will let it go at that."

"Not so, sir, for Captain Stanwood is no assassin to strike at a man's back."

"He came upon you to your face, and taking you by the throat, hurled you from him, and you fell, striking your head on that rock," and she put forth her tiny foot and touched the rock, while she added:

"If the story has to be told, sir, the public shall know the exact truth."

"It need not be told, Miss Revere, as you do not seem to wish it."

"Oh, it is a matter of indifference to me, but for your sake I advise, as the truth will place you in a very black light before your friends, Mr. Farley."

"I can but reiterate, Miss Revere, that it need not be referred to."

"Then, sir, ask the pardon of Miss Stanwood for your insult, and I will then call my coachman to take you home."

Pearl was as haughty as a queen, and as firm as a rock, but the merchant said:

"I do not consider that I insulted Miss Stanwood, Miss Revere."

"Very well, sir, I shall report it to my father, who, in the absence of Captain Stanwood, will feel it his duty to send a friend to you demanding—"

"No, no, Miss Revere, I show my high regard for you by apologizing," cried Frank Farley, who was well aware that Prince Paul had killed his man in a duel, and was so superb a swordsman he always, in a number of affairs of honor, would disarm his adversary, and was a man to be feared above all men.

"The apology is not to me, sir, for were I in the situation of Miss Stanwood I would refuse to accept it; but her heart is a forgiving one and she may do so."

"Then I sincerely beg Miss Ethel's pardon," said Farley, and it could be seen that it cut him to the quick to humble himself as Pearl forced him to do.

Ethel simply bowed, while Pearl said:

"Now, Ethel, pray go and ask James to drive over here for Mr. Farley, who has been injured by a fall."

Ethel obeyed in silence, and as she walked away, Pearl said:

"Mr. Farley, advice is not always acceptable, but I intend to offer it to you, and it is that you cease to persecute Miss Stanwood further."

"She does not love you, so accept no for an answer and do not by threats attempt to force her to marry you."

"You seem to be the devoted friend of Miss Stanwood, and yet urge her against the gaining of riches and a life of luxury for herself and mother, a ship for her brother, by marrying me?"

"Yes, for she would but sell herself to benefit her mother and brother, neither of whom would submit to the sacrifice of her sweet young life to you, Mr. Farley, a man old enough to be her father, not to consider other circumstances which a young and beautiful girl would wish in a lover, a man she hoped to marry."

"Pardon my frankness, but you force me to speak as I do, and let me add that I am Miss Stanwood's most devoted friend, for I owe it to her brother that I was not torn to pieces by a savage dog when I was a little girl."

"He threw himself upon the brute as he sprung at my throat, and in spite of being severely bitten held the animal until my nurse dragged me away to safety, and help came to the brave boy in his unequal battle with the huge, fierce dog."

"I shall never forget that day, Mr. Farley, and shall defend the sister of the man who saved me from a fearful fate; but the carriage is here, and my coachman will drive you to your home, while permit me to suggest that you pick up your surgeon on the way."

"James, Mr. Farley has received quite a severe injury, so drive him to his home in all haste, and stop for Doctor Andrews on your way."

"Then return here for me—Good evening, Mr. Farley, and accept my wishes for your speedy recovery."

Frank Farley bowed, but gnashed his teeth with rage as he entered the carriage and drove away.

"That girl is a very devil!"

"And once I thought of asking her to marry me."

"And Ethel Stanwood is like putty and I can mold her to my will—yes, and I will do so, for she shall yet become my wife," and he leaned back on the cushions faint from loss of blood from the gash on the side of his head.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BOLD SWIMMER.

IT was impossible for Frank Farley to keep the secret of the affair with Noel Stanwood, for it leaked out to a friend and so went the words from lip to lip, until the rumor was that the young sailor had attempted to assassinate the wealthy merchant, and had only been thwarted in his murderous intention by the courage of the victim, who, for the sake of their past friendship had spared the culprit upon condition that he would at once set sail on a long voyage.

Such was the rumor, and it went the rounds, while when asked upon the subject Frank Farley simply shrugged his shoulders and would reply:

"I have nothing to say upon the subject!"

Then came the rumor that, in the nobleness of his heart, the merchant was really taking care of the wife and daughter of his old partner, merely for old friendship's sake.

These rumors reached the ears of Pearl Revere,

but she could do nothing to prevent them, other than very frankly giving her views when the subject was under discussion.

Farley had been laid up with his gashed head for a couple of weeks, but then got about, and not to be set back by what had occurred, he coolly called upon Mrs. Stanwood and Ethel.

But he took very good care to first find out that there was no visitor there answering to the name of Pearl Revere.

He pretended to be very humble after his offense and really made Mrs. Stanwood believe that he was sincere, for she had been told all.

The clouds of coming war were gathering in the horizon, and party feeling was beginning to run high.

The king's cruisers in American waters were all kept on the alert, and instead of a frigate, as was first intended, being sent to the far South and round into the Pacific on an extended cruise, the pirate schooner, Red Shark, altered into a brig, and her name changed to simply that of Shark, and under a gallant commander, Captain Carter Kane she was sent on her mission.

This was some two months after the flight of Noel Stanwood, so that it was known to several of the officers that rumors of a serious nature against the young sailor were going the rounds of the town.

There had also come a rumor into port of the mysterious carrying on at sea of the king's Silver Ship, and orders had been given to Captain Kane to have a lookout kept for the weird craft on his voyage southward.

The Shark, under her new rig, sailed even better than she had done as a schooner, and made rapid progress southward.

When near Abaco she met with an English sloop-of-war, and as it was a calm day the officers visited each other and the story of the mystery of the sea was told to Captain Kane by men who had really seen and chased the strange craft, the king's Silver Ship, known as the Wind Witch.

"What did you make of her, captain?" the commander of the Shark asked the officer in command of the sloop-of-war.

"Just the king's yacht, and nothing more, for I met Sir St. George Maybrick, who is a cousin of mine you may not know, at about this very locality on his way out after the silver."

"He dined with me, for it was that day, as now, calm weather, and he told me his plans."

"To get a view of his beautiful craft, and also of the pirate, Belmont, whom he allowed the freedom of his vessel, I returned with him on board for half an hour, along with half a dozen of my officers."

"And you saw Belmont?"

"Yes, Kane, and I assure you he was a splendid-looking fellow and as courtly as a cavalier."

"I had a talk with him and he looked little like the blood-thirsty wretch he is painted."

"And the brig?"

"Was the most perfect beauty I ever saw."

"You know my sloop is fast, and when I left the brig, a fine breeze sprung up, just the kind my vessel does her best in, and as I was coming toward Cuba I tried speed with Sir George, and I assure you he seemed to run away from me as though I was drifting, and not a topsail did he set."

"And you have seen him since?"

"Kane, I have seen either the brig playing some hideous joke, or her phantom."

"This is remarkable, Captain Sylvester."

"Yes, and I hooted at the stories I heard of the craft from different vessels I spoke, until one day I sighted her."

"I gave chase and ran near."

"Then she headed away and I fired several shots over her to come to, but without any effect, and I opened with a broadside, and with the same result."

"I spread upon the sloop every stitch of canvas she could catch a breath of wind with, and the brig, phantom or what you may call it glided away from me."

"As night came on the crew came aft in a body and said that they would not touch hand to a sail if I kept in the specter's way."

"I yielded to their fears, for I was glad to do so."

"And what is your opinion, Sylvester?"

"I don't know; but Maybrick is no scamp to run off with the silver, nor a traitor to his king, and God only knows what to think about the accursed mystery."

After such a conversation Captain Kane returned to his vessel deeply impressed, and from the officers and men of the sloop-of-war his officers and crew had heard about the same story, for there was hardly a man on the vessel that had chased the Wind Witch but believed that the real king's yacht had met her doom, and her phantom only was sailing the seas.

Some asserted that the buccaneer, Belmont, was a wizard, and that it was owing to him that the Wind Witch had met her awful fate; but though they could not solve the weird mystery, all were certainly impressed with the fact that the strange brig was cruising the ocean and at any minute might cross their path, and the thought caused the superstitious sailors to

shudder with dread at such a catastrophe being likely to occur.

But the Shark, to the delight of her crew, and it may be said of her officers also, escaped fighting the Wind Witch, and reached the coast of Peru without any particular adventure.

While at anchor in an obscure harbor on the Peruvian coast a form suddenly appeared over the bulwarks of the brig, and the men were startled half out of their wits, for they were nearly a mile off-shore, no sail had been heard, no boat had been seen near.

"Ahoy, mates, I am only a man, and have swum off to have a talk with your captain," said the stranger, in a voice that was deep and commanding.

"It's a strange way to board a king's ship, sir, and if you'd gotten a hail from a musket's muzzle it would have served you right," said a lieutenant, stepping forward.

"I could not have been hailed, sir, without being seen, though I saw you distinctly leaning over the bulwark."

"Will you allow me to see your captain?"

"You are insolent! What is your business with him?"

"That I shall make known to him, sir."

"What! do you dare address me thus?"

"Lieutenant Brule, I know you, and there is no need of a quarrel between us, for I came upon a matter of deep and immediate import."

"I am Captain Noel Stanwood, sir, of the American merchant service."

"The deuce! Now I know you, for we met quite often in Boston, when you were in society; but since your downfall, you have not moved in the best of circles."

"What are you doing here, may I ask?"

"Will you take the responsibility, Sir Bradwyn Brule, of refusing to permit me to see your captain?"

"How do you know that I am not captain?"

"Because I saw Captain Kane ashore in his boat this afternoon, sir."

"Come, Brule, what is this delay about, when a man has asked to see me, and swum off from the shore in these shark-infested waters so do so?" and Captain Kane, who had gone forward, unknown to his lieutenant, spoke with a sternness that showed he had overheard what had passed between the daring swimmer and the senior officer.

"It is Noel Stanwood, sir, a young man who was once known among the best people in Boston, but who is I believe now, a fugitive from justice for some crime," was Sir Bradwyn Brule's insulting remark, as he turned away without seeing Noel Stanwood's sudden impulse, as quickly checked, to resent his words by a blow.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SAILOR'S WARNING.

"WELL, Mr. Stanwood, be seated, and let me give you a glass of brandy, for you look like one who had passed through a brave ordeal," said Captain Kane in a kindly manner, as Noel Stanwood entered the cabin with him, stripped to the waist, barefooted and hatless, as he came out of the sea over the bulwarks of the brig.

His face was wan, his eyes sunken and he appeared like a man who had suffered untold hardships, or passed through a severe illness.

"I will take the brandy, sir, for I need it, and thank you; but I have no time to lose, for I have come to warn you of danger."

"Indeed! what can it be that threatens here, and let me ask you why I find you in this forsaken land, and coming off to my vessel by swimming?"

"First let me tell you, sir, that you have anchored in a harbor to which you doubtless came to fill your water-casks, but which is a nest of pirates."

"Ah! is that so?"

"It is, sir, as I can prove if you will tell me if you lost a man overboard last night, when laying off the inlet for daylight to run in by?"

"Yes, it was blowing hard, and one of my best men fell from the yard into the sea."

"I lowered the life-boat but saw nothing of him."

"Again, sir, let me ask if the pirate chief whom I captured on this vessel did not escape from prison in Boston?"

"He did, two weeks before we sailed, and a few nights before the day appointed for hanging him."

"But how in the name of Neptune did you know it, and also about the loss of my man overboard last night?"

"Because, Captain Kane, that man did not fall overboard, but jumped."

"The wind and tide were both from the sea, and he readily reached the shore."

"Impossible, for we were a mile or more away."

"You are a mile from the nearest shore now, sir, and yet I swam off to you."

"Egad, that's so; but the man's motive."

"Did he not suggest that you come here for water?"

"In truth he is the very man that did, for he said he had often come here on other vessels."

"Captain Kane, that pretended sailor was none other than Captain Crimson the pirate."

"Impossible!"

"I vouch for the truth of what I say, sir."

"He escaped from prison in Boston, and, with his beard shaved off, and in sailor garb went boldly on board your vessel and shipped as a common seaman."

"He suggested this place where you could get splendid water, and deserted last night, swam ashore and went to his old rendezvous, which is a pirates' nest."

"He found here three small vessels and their crews, and arranged with them to seize his brig to-night, as he calls this craft."

"All told he raised over a hundred men, and they are to come out in a lugger, pretending to be a Peruvian trader, and when tacking near you to lay you aboard and carry the brig; and if, as he told his fellows, you have but sixty men, he can do it, especially as it will be a surprise, a complete one."

"That is just what it would be, but for you, Mr. Stanwood, and the fellow is right, for I have but sixty men, and several of them are sick."

"I lost three men overboard in a storm, two deserted in Rio, and five died of fever."

"But you astound me, and I know not how to thank you."

"Come, tell me all you know of the plot, and my officers must hear it, so as to at once prepare to counterplot against them fellows."

The officers were called into the cabin, and Captain Kane presented Stanwood, to several of whom he was already known, and they heard his story.

"May Stanwood not have some motive, Captain Kane, in coming off with this story, to gain a pardon for a pretended warning of danger, so that he can return to the Colonies with you?"

"Sir Bradwyn Brule, you will please keep such comments to yourself, sir," said Captain Kane sternly, while Noel Stanwood remarked:

"Lieutenant Brule is welcome to his opinion, sir, regarding me, and if not complimentary it but reflects mine of him."

"But I came off here, at the risk of my life to save this vessel from an attack I know will be made by midnight, and you will have to beat off crew a hundred as bloodthirsty wretches as ever boarded a deck, and Captain Crimson gained his name from never showing quarter."

"As to my leaving Boston under a cloud, I do not deny it, and I came to South America in command of a vessel I brought out to the Government and from my landing, misfortune has claimed me for its own."

"I was wounded and robbed in Mente Video, and shipped on a vessel bound for Rio."

"The craft was captured by Peruvian pirates, and to save my life I joined the crew several weeks ago, and put into this harbor with them, which as I said is a retreat for outlaws."

"I was taken ill, and have been in my bunk for days, and so heard the talk of Captain Crimson's escape from prison, then from your brig, and the whole plot to attack your vessel to-night."

"The craft I was on lay in a lagoon, and I slipped out of the port, reached the shore and came along it until I saw your lights, when I swam off to warn you."

"When my words have proven true, sir, I am ready to ship as a common seaman on the brig, and thus work my way back to Boston."

"No, Mr. Stanwood, you shall return as my guest, and you will soon look yourself once more."

"I will only return sir, as a seaman, accepting no hospitality, Captain Kane, though I well know how generously you offer it; but do not delay, sir, in preparing to resist attack, for you have not any too much time."

"Mr. Stanwood, my boatswain died yesterday of fever, and as I have heard of your ability as a sailor, I beg you to take his berth."

"You will oblige me in this, I know."

"Gladly, sir."

"But are you strong enough now?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and may I suggest that you fight the Devil with fire, or throw your grapnels the moment he boards, so he cannot run away, and deliver a broadside and musket volleys together, all double-shot, for your success will be in the surprise you give them."

"You are right, sir, and I will follow your advice."

"Gentlemen, please remember that Mr. Stanwood is boatswain of the brig," and going into his state-room Captain Kane bade the young sailor follow him and soon fitted him out with clothing, shoes and a hat.

In the mean time, Sir Bradwyn Brule, who was really a fine officer, had come on deck and prepared the brig for the ordeal through which it was to pass, though he sneeringly said to his brother officers that he did not expect any attack, and it was a plot of Stanwood's to get back home in the Shark, and have the credit of having warned Captain Kane of what was only a pretended danger.

Hardly had Sir Bradwyn said as much to Lieutenant Caspar Caldwell and other officers grouped near, when Noel Stanwood, who was afloat gazing over the taffrail, said in a low voice, but perfectly distinct:

"Sail ho! Captain Crimson and his pirates are coming, and this is to be a fight with no mercy shown."

CHAPTER XX.

A RED CARNIVAL OF COMBAT.

ALL upon the brig were now in watchful suspense, and prepared for the coming of the pirates.

Even Sir Bradwyn Brule felt that he might be mistaken in the reason of Stanwood's coming on board the brig, and prepared his men for the conflict which it now seemed must occur.

The cannon had all been double-shot on both broadsides, the charges being of grape and canister to do the greater damage to life, so that whichever side the foe came he would feel the force of the guns.

Then, too, the muskets had all been double charged with bullets and buckshot, and the pistols, too, while the cutlasses and boarding-pikes were ready at hand.

The men were crouching down behind a canvas run between the guns, and upon the deck only several forms were visible, an officer on his post and the watch amidships and forward.

To any one coming near, the brig seemed as though her crew were asleep below.

The craft beating out was seen to be a large, lumber-looking coaster, but those on the brig well knew that just such craft were fleet sailors, carrying a great deal of canvas, and that they were most dangerous foes.

The vessel came along on short tacks, beating out of the land-locked bay, which had a narrow channel running into it, though a deep one.

The bay was about four square miles in space, and the brig was anchored a mile off-shore, in front of one of the lagoons that flowed into it, and where Captain Kane had landed during the day. He had found there a wretched-looking hamlet of fishermen, but had never suspected that they were pirates.

Nearer and nearer came the lugger, and soon she started upon a tack that would bring her right under the stern of the brig if she held her course."

It was now seen that it was her intention to board upon the starboard side, sailing so as to appear to pass close under the stern, and suddenly luff up sharp and glide alongside of the vessel-of-war.

The grapnel-throwers were then ordered to take their stands, and the men with muskets took position on the opposite side of the brig, while the gunners of the starboard battery crouched down among their pieces with all ready to fire.

On came the lugger, and Noel Stanwood, who stood in the companionway with Captain Kane, said:

"You can see the dark mass on the decks, sir, that looks like freight?"

"Yes, but I have an idea that it is men huddled together, Stanwood."

"You are right, sir, and if the gunners and musketeers know that they have a very large force to cut down, and where to point their guns, the first fire will do the most good."

"You are right, Stanwood, so go along the ship and point this fact out to the officers in command," said the captain, and Noel Stanwood obeyed.

The officers to a man received the information politely with one exception, Sir Bradwyn Brule, who asked haughtily:

"Did this come from the captain, or yourself?"

"I said, sir, that Captain Kane sent me to instruct you as to how the pirates were grouped upon their craft, and for you to aim your guns at the mass of them to do all the damage possible at the first fire, for, Lieutenant Brule, if I mistake not there are two hundred men on yonder lugger, more than I believed they could bring."

"I did not ask for your opinion, sir," was the haughty response, and Noel Stanwood went on his way along the deck, while the junior lieutenant, Lord Erskine Enders said somewhat sternly:

"I think, Brule, you are too severe on a man to whom, if we beat back that pirate horde, you will owe your life."

"How are you interested in the fellow, my lord, may I ask?" returned Sir Bradwyn.

"Simply upon the plea of humanity and decency," was the cool rejoinder, and then he added:

"What the man's crime was that caused him to leave Boston I do not know; but I have been told that he was once rich, and a gentleman respected by all, coming from an old American family."

"His risking his life to swim out to this brig shows true manhood, and I honor him greatly for his noble deed for others."

"The pirates are not beaten off yet, my lord, and it may be found that after all the fellow is in league with them, a spy, and has gulled the captain into trusting him."

"That is unworthy of you, Sir Bradwyn Brule," was the hot reply of Lord Erskine Enders, and he turned away.

Sir Bradwyn was a poor baronet, with little else than his pay, for his income was small.

Generally in debt he always found it convenient to pay off his liabilities when pressing, by borrowing from his friend and brother officer, who was the descendant of an old family

noted in English history, and very rich, with a very large income.

Lord Erskine loaned ungrudgingly, and then held Sir Bradwyn's I. O. U.'s for quite a large sum; but that was no reason that Lord Erskine spoke hotly to his senior officer, for he had a way of speaking out frankly when he deemed a man going wrong, for he was the soul of honor himself.

He was the most popular man on board the brig, and a perfect sailor as well, with a cool head and undaunted nerve.

But Sir Bradwyn had no desire to ruffle the goose that laid the golden egg, so made no reply, and the matter was dropped, as the newly-appointed boatswain, the cause of the controversy, passed back to rejoin the captain, who had bidden him remain with him during the action.

Noel Stanwood had been given a couple of double-barreled pistols and a cutlass, and was ready for the fray when he returned to the captain's side.

"All ready, sir, and the lugger is almost upon her."

"Would it not be well to hail, sir?"

"Will they understand you?"

"In Spanish, yes, sir."

"Do so, and note the result."

"That voice has a splendid ring to it," said Lord Erskine to Lieutenant Caldwell, as Stanwood hailed in Spanish:

"Ho, the goleta ahoy!"

"Ojo la brigatina, ho!" came back in a sleepy voice.

"Keep off a couple of points, or you'll brush the paint off of our taffrail."

"Si, Senor el Capitan," was the answer, and immediately the bows swept up into the wind and the lugger glided up to the starboard side of the brig.

"Throw grapnels!" shouted Captain Kane through his trumpet, and with a sharp, short cheer from the British crew, the grapnels were thrown, and the goleta was checked with a shock and held fast.

"At your guns—fire!"

The command of Captain Kane was answered by the roar of the five broadside guns, turned upon the crowded heap of humanity, and at once came the order:

"Attention, marines—fire!"

The volley of musket-balls tore into the living, struggling, cursing mass of pirates, and the execution was appalling.

So rapidly had the grapnels been thrown, the broadside fired, and the rattle of musketry followed, that not a minute had elapsed, and the pirates, when preparing to board with a rush, were completely dazed with surprise.

The bulwarks were torn into splinters by the grape and canister, their decks gashed, and the iron and leaden hail had cut down in killed and wounded one-third of their number.

But all on the brig at once saw the virtue of that first fire and surprise, for the pirates were three to one against them.

Another volley of musketry, and a second discharge of the broadside helped matters greatly for the brig's crew, and then, as the pirates were huddled for boarding, a form sprung upon the bulwarks, and firing his pistol into the crowd of buccaneers, called out:

"Boarders, follow me!"

It was Lord Erskine Enders, and by his side was Noel Stanwood.

In fact the latter had sprung to the side of the lieutenant and said, hastily:

"Will you lead the boarders, sir, for it would not look well for me to do so, and these pirates must be beaten at their own game?"

"You are right, sir!" and Lord Erskine led the charge, and Stanwood leaped upon the goleta's deck by his side, and the swing of his cutlass sent a burly buccaneer to his last account.

The crew of the brig were quick to follow their lieutenant, and under the rush the pirates were sent backward pell-mell.

But Captain Crimson rallied them, and a volley of shots brought down some dozen gallant tars, dead and wounded, and, for a moment, all looked black for the brig's men, for the outlaws saw that their force was still superior, and they, in turn, became the assailants.

Then came the order in the same voice that had so thrilled the men when it was heard hailing the goleta:

"Men of the brig, draw your guns in and turn them upon the stern of the goleta! fire through your bulwarks and theirs!"

A cheer answered the hail, for the new idea of firing through the bulwarks, as they could do no damage fired through the ports, except to their own men, showed that all realized the worth of the new boatswain as a leader in the fight.

The roar of the guns and tearing of timbers followed, and was fearful, and the decks of the goleta astern, where the pirates were crowding for a rush upon the crew of the Shark, who held their decks forward were swept by splinters and a hail of iron that laid a score of men dead.

Then were heard cries for mercy from some, the plunging of others into the sea, and still more slipped over the stern into a large barge towing there and pulled away in the darkness.

Shots followed them, but they held on and soon disappeared, and Captain Kane glanced over his prize and prisoners, and said:

"My God! what a scene of carnage!

"Stanwood, we owe our lives and the saving of the brig to you!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE INSULT.

THE combat had almost been throughout without mercy.

The British tars well knew that they would be shown no quarter had they appealed for it, and so they pressed their foes relentlessly.

The pirates' loss was terrible, and dead men lay upon the decks of the brig, where a few had boarded to meet instant death, while the *goleta* was a perfect wreck, with savage-faced pirates lying motionless, others in the last dying gasp, and a few groaning, cursing or praying in their anguish.

The last shots of the brig had torn her bulwarks to atoms, as the guns had been pointed right up against them, and thus sent a hurtling mass of wood and splinters along with the iron hail.

But they had been the shots that had saved the cruiser, and even Sir Bradwyn Brule recognized this fact, and was gracious enough to say to the new boatswain:

"That was a novel idea of yours, my man, and showed thought and nerve in action."

"Had you been reared in the Royal Navy you might have had hope of becoming a great captain some day."

Stanwood made no reply, but Lord Erskine heard the words and replied for him with:

"That does not follow, Brule, for you have been fifteen years in the Royal Navy, and I have never seen your name on the list of heroes yet; but you are young yet," and Lord Erskine felt that Brule deserved the shot he gave him, for his pretended praise of the boatswain was but an insult disguised under a compliment.

"I must manage to pay Enders the money I owe him, so I can resent his words, for he seems awful bitter of late," muttered Lieutenant Brule, and yet he knew that not a word other than kindness had Lord Erskine ever uttered to him before, and then only because he had acted in such an unmanly manner toward Stanwood, while he and the other officers had thanked the young sailor for all he had done to save them from the clutches of the pirates.

It was certain that Captain Crimson had escaped, and with him some forty men in the barge.

As many more had sprung into the sea, and the greater number of them would doubtless reach the shore, as they were splendid swimmers, those Peruvian Coast men.

The remainder of the force had either drowned, or lay dead, dying or prisoners upon the decks of the *goleta* and brig.

But the new boatswain set to work with a will, and soon had the brig's decks cleared, while the half-dozen unhurt pirates were put in irons and sent below.

The wounded were turned over to the surgeon, save the dying, and the dead placed upon their vessel, which, of little use, was anchored a short distance away from the Shark.

"I can point out to you the location of their retreat, sir, if you wish to turn your guns upon them, while, if you will pardon the suggestion, it would be well to send a couple of boats ashore, with howitzers in the bows, to continue the attack after the bombardment ceases."

"Well said, Boatswain Stanwood, and I'll act upon your suggestion," said Captain Kane, and the guns of the brig were at once pointed shoreward, and opened fire.

Shouts from the shore revealed the fact that Stanwood had directed the aim well, and in the mean time, with the young sailor as pilot in Lord Erskine's boat, for he went in command, the party started ashore.

Just as the firing of the schooner ceased the two boats had entered the lagoon, and the howitzers mounted in the bows kept up the attack.

Then, with cheers the tars landed in pursuit of the flying pirates and their houses were set on fire, their half-dozen small vessels burned, and when day dawned the brig's crew had completed their grand victory.

Upon the return of the boats the prisoners who were not wounded were hanged, and the wounded sent ashore, when the *goleta* was also burned, and, having filled her water casks the Shark headed out of the harborage.

The brig then continued on her course up the coast, and put in for a short stop at Lima.

The duties of boatswain had been perfectly performed by Stanwood, who began to look like himself once more, after the hardships he had known, and all on the ship seemed to regard him highly except Sir Bradwyn Brule.

When he was officer of the deck he took every opportunity to try and worry the boatswain in a hundred different ways.

He appeared to find pleasure in tormenting him, and when neither Captain Kane or Lord Erskine were on deck, Stanwood was sure to be a sufferer at the hands of the senior officer.

The men noticed it and were very angry, and the younger officers saw that the senior was using petty spite against the boatswain, yet they dared not say anything.

Lord Erskine also noticed the fact, and had become very cool in his treatment of the offending lieutenant.

One day the brig was becalmed, a day out of port, and Lieutenant Brule brought his desk on deck and was looking over some old letters, doubtless from his many lady-loves.

Presently he picked up a miniature set in a frame of velvet, fastened with a gold clasp.

"I never showed you my bright particular star, did I, Caldwell?" he asked, as he held up the miniature.

"No, and how beautiful the face; it is perfect, and I could love one like that."

"Is it not beautiful, Lord Erskine, for I suppose I can show it to my lord, Sir Bradwyn?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Yes, she is beautiful, indeed, and I believe I have seen her in Boston."

"May I ask who she is?"

"A lady to whom I am engaged, and whose warm kisses of farewell yet linger on my lips—Ho, b'ozen, perhaps you can tell my Lord Erskine Enders the name of this fair maid?" and Sir Bradwyn thrust the miniature before Noel Stanwood, who was just then busy with some act near, and of course heard all.

One glance at the miniature and his face became deadly white.

He recognized a miniature which Pearl Reverie had secretly given him a year before, and which he had loaned to her to have one painted from it for her father, and in the haste of his departure from home had not gotten it back.

"Yes, Sir Bradwyn Brule, I know the lady well, sir, and to the words you first uttered regarding her I fling the lie in your teeth!" said the young sailor, in a voice that, though low, was painfully distinct in the utterance of every word, as he thus insulted his superior before half a dozen of his brother officers.

All present were startled by the words of the sailor, who faced his lieutenant calm and fearless in mien.

"My God!" broke from the lips of Lord Erskine, who, at a glance, saw the fearful consequences of the act.

As for Sir Bradwyn, he stood an instant like one struck a severe blow, and then, with a cry like a madman, whipped out his sword and sprung toward the sailor, with the words:

"You shall die for that!"

But ere Lord Erskine could interfere, Stanwood had whipped out his sailor's knife, turned the sword from his heart by a skillful parry, and seizing the weapon, wrenched it from the grasp of the officer, snapped the blade in twain, and cast the pieces into the sea, while he dealt his intended murderer a stinging slap upon the cheek.

Lord Erskine could hardly restrain a cry of admiration at the quick work done; but he was officer of the deck, and said, sternly:

"Boatswain Stanwood, I place you under arrest. Mr. Caldwell, send the sergeant of marines and a file of men to put this man in irons."

"Thank you, my lord, for so promptly taking the proper steps to punish this mutineer, who of course will hang for his act," said Sir Bradwyn.

As for Stanwood, he saluted politely, and, folding his arms, awaited the coming of the marines, and held forth his hands for the irons when the sergeant stepped toward him.

"There he goes to his death, for that act hangs him, thank God!" uttered Sir Bradwyn, with malicious joy.

"Pardon me, Sir Bradwyn Brule, but you are too hasty in your conclusions, for Stanwood is not a king's man, being simply acting boatswain at the request of Captain Kane, so he can not be tried as a mutineer. The fact that he is a gentleman, and one who has rendered us all incalculable service, is to his credit, while the words you addressed to him, and which he quickly nailed as a lie, and his disarming you when you attacked him, and his slapping your face severely, all make your grievance merely a personal one—not an official one."

"Then you, sir, side with the mutineer?"

"I state facts, Brule, and Captain Kane will be as plain in his statement of the case. Our brother officers here witnessed the affair, as did the men, and a glance will show you that some very ugly looks are cast in this direction.

"I am your friend, Sir Bradwyn, if you will let me be; but I will not uphold any man in what my own manhood tells me is a wrong act."

Lord Erskine spoke earnestly, and a glance showed to Sir Bradwyn that the other officers felt as the young nobleman did.

But he said with a sneer:

"I can hardly treasure such friendship, Lord Erskine, that sides with my enemy."

"I would not side with my own father in what I deemed wrong; but, as you please, sir," and Lord Erskine began to coolly pace the deck, while Sir Bradwyn went into the cabin to make his report to Captain Kane.

When eight bells struck, and Lieutenant Caldwell took the deck, Lord Erskine sent for Sir Bradwyn to accompany him to Captain Kane,

where he would make his report of the unfortunate affair.

"I have asked Sir Bradwyn Brule to be present, Captain Kane, as I wish to make no charge behind his back that I would not make to his face."

"You have doubtless heard his report, sir, and I desire to offer mine."

"Pray do so, Lieutenant Enders."

The report was made, just as it occurred, with the words:

"I deeply regret the affair sir, but I must say that I judge Sir Bradwyn harshly, unless he will assure me upon his honor that his appeal to Stanwood was not intentional, because he knew that the sailor was a friend of the lady in question."

"Did you know such to be the case, Sir Bradwyn?" asked Captain Kane.

"I met him in her company once, sir," was the reply.

"Then you expected your words to hurt the man when you handed him the miniature?"

"As Lord Erskine seems to put me on honor, I will say that I did expect the man to do some act, or utter some word that would be punishable."

"Lieutenant Brule, Mr. Stanwood is simply acting as boatswain on this vessel, and had he not refused to accept the hospitality of my cabin, would have been my guest."

"Neither I, nor the king, have any legal claim upon him other than through courtesy, and I wish you to go upon deck and tell Lieutenant Caldwell that my orders are to have Mr. Stanwood at once relieved of his irons, though you did your duty, my lord, in ordering him under arrest as you did."

"Say, sir, to Lieutenant Caldwell, that he is to send Mr. Stanwood to my cabin, and at once appoint a seaman as boatswain, for from this on Mr. Stanwood is the guest of this ship, and in doing as I do, Sir Bradwyn, I only act as duty dictates, whereas, if the gentleman you have taken numerous occasions to humble, as I have observed, were, in reality an enlisted seaman in his Majesty's service, guilty of what he has been, it would be my very painful duty to order him shot within the hour."

"You have heard, my orders, Lieutenant Brule."

Gritting his teeth with rage, Sir Bradwyn arose and left the cabin, and ten minutes after Stanwood entered and was asked to be seated by Captain Kane, whose face was stern and an angry light flashing in his eyes.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN AFFAIR OF HONOR.

SIR BRADWYN BRULE was completely nonplussed by the stand taken by the captain, who had always been most friendly to him.

In fact a warm friendship existed between his own and the Kane families, and he had expected the captain to side with him in the affair that had caused such a feeling on board the ship.

He had gone to his commander with his story, and had told him his version of the affair, rather treating it as though he was sorry he had not killed Stanwood and was a much-abused man.

He knew that Captain Kane would be just if the heavens fell, and he was puzzled that he made no comment other than to say:

"I will hear the report of the officer of the deck, Lieutenant Brule, before I make my decision."

This decision was against him, and it was with bitterness in his heart that he had to go and deliver the order to the officer of the deck to release Stanwood from irons.

"It's hard, is it not, Caldwell?"

"Under the circumstances, Sir Bradwyn, it is all that could be done, and I agreed with Lord Erskine, that you dragged the boatswain into the affair from some reason of your own."

"I told the captain that I expected Stanwood would say, or do something to give me a chance to humble him, but I confess he was too quick for me, and his grip is an iron one."

"You have cause for spite against him, then?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you, Caldwell, that I have."

"The truth is I am not engaged to the lady in question, for she refused me."

"The deuce she did!"

"Fact, I assure you, and isn't it strange?"

"Very, for I thought you were a clever fellow in winning the fair sex."

"Egad, and I am; but she refused me."

"But gave you her miniature?"

"No, I was escorting her one evening to call upon a friend, to whom she was taking the miniature, and it was Stanwood's sister, and had been borrowed for the purpose of having one painted from it, I believe."

"Miss Stanwood was not at home, and as I had put the miniature into my pocket, neither of us thought of leaving it."

"I escorted the lady home, and she again refused my heart and hand, and I left in anger."

"Upon going to my ship we had orders, as you know, to sail in haste, and I was surprised some days after to find the miniature in my pocket."

"I believe that the lady loves the fellow Stanwood, and so causes me to lose a large fortune, for she is very rich, and naturally I hate him, you see; but there he is."

As Stanwood passed he saluted politely and went on into the cabin, where Captain Kane, after bidding him be seated, said:

"Mr. Stanwood, as you have not been entered as a king's seaman, and were serving as boatswain simply to oblige me, and also, feeling that you acted under impulse, with just cause doubtless for anger, I have ordered your release, and, relieving you from duty, must beg that you be my guest on my vessel, back to the Colonies."

"I thank you, Captain Kane, and until we reach port will accept your kind hospitality; but I can readily get a berth there in some homeward bound craft."

"As you please, Mr. Stanwood, for you know best."

"And Stanwood, my dear fellow, don't take it amiss if I ask you, with real friendship, to accept a loan from me, for your needs," said Lord Erskine.

"As frankly as you offer it, Lord Erskine, I accept it, upon condition you take an order from me for repayment upon my mother, in whose hands are my funds."

"Certainly, if you wish it; but you better let it continue until some day we meet again."

"I prefer to give you the order, my lord, and I sincerely thank you for the loan."

"You are more than welcome, I assure you, so name the sum."

"A hundred pounds, sir, will enable me to take passage for home, should I not get a berth."

"Here, Mr. Stanwood, is the amount, and heartily glad am I to let you have it, and—Thank you, I'll keep the order to present, unless you arrive before me, in which case come and see me, when our brig reaches port, for I do hate money transactions with ladies," and Lord Erskine laughed.

In the meanwhile Sir Bradwyn had been talking to Lieutenant Caldwell, and when Lord Erskine came on deck and mentioned that Stanwood was the captain's guest, he said:

"Then that settles it, my lord, for as Stanwood has been made the equal of Captain Kane, as his guest, there is but one thing for me to do."

"Yes, Brule, and what is that?"

"I cannot take the lie and blow from a gentleman, you know."

"Ah, yes, very true."

"So I shall challenge Stanwood the hour we reach port."

"It does look as though you had to do so, Sir Bradwyn."

"Egad, I must, under the circumstances."

"As a sailor, giving me the lie and a blow, I could only see to having him punished; but Captain Kane has promoted Stanwood to the rank of a gentleman, so I must resent the insults and call him out and kill him."

"Certainly."

"Don't you think so, too, Caldwell?"

"I was in hopes the affair would end where it is," said Caspar Caldwell, deprecatingly.

"Impossible, for I cannot wear the lie and a blow with honor to myself—eh, my Lord Enders?"

"I could not," was the quiet response.

"Then I shall call him out and run him through the heart."

"As he is the challenged party, Brule, he may not select swords, and hardly will, for you know he has been in the merchant marine, and not like ourselves, a trained soldier."

"A pistol would even up the chances for him, you know."

"He handled a cutlass as though he had swung one before; but he can select what he pleases, for he shall meet me."

"By the way, Brule, it strikes me that just now he is under a cloud, I believe, having, as I have heard, left Boston for some reason, so that must waive the challenge," said Lord Erskine, now anxious to prevent a duel, as he feared Sir Bradwyn's deadly aim and superb swordsmanship against one who had not been reared to the life of a fighting man.

"I shall waive that, and the man must meet me, or I shall punish him when he goes ashore."

"You are the judge, sir," and Lord Erskine quickly turned away, and just in time, as he knew, to avoid being asked to be the second of Sir Bradwyn in the affair of honor.

"Caldwell?"

"Well, Sir Bradwyn."

"You have always been a good friend of mine."

"Yes, lieutenant, I have always felt friendship for you."

"Now I wish you to serve me, for I can do but one thing, now that Captain Kane has made this fellow Stanwood my equal."

"How can I do aught for you, Sir Bradwyn?"

"We will arrive in Callao in the morning, if we get a wind, and Stanwood will go ashore there, and I wish you to seek him out and carry a challenge for me to him."

"To fight, or apologize?"

"My dear Caspar, there can be no apology for a blow, and the lie direct."

"I forgot for a minute the cause, Sir Bradwyn."

"And you will do this for me?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And it must be kept from Captain Kane, or, to protect his protege he will get to sea again, leaving him there."

"Of course I will say nothing of the affair, but I am very sorry it happened, and wish it could be arranged without a duel."

"It cannot be, and besides I am getting rusty in these affairs, for I have not been out since I killed Kendrix in Jamaica."

"I thought your affair with St. Stephens in Halifax was after that, sir?"

"Ah, yes, so it was, but that had quite escaped my mind."

"St. Stephens died afterward, I believe?"

"Yes, I ran him through the body, and he never recovered from the wound."

"It was about a lady, I believe?"

"Yes, most of my affairs are about women, you know, and I have had a number of them; but men know my aim and the skill I possess with a sword, so are shy of me of late years."

"Yes, you are certainly dreaded as a duelist, Sir Bradwyn, and I believe you never show mercy?"

"Never! I go to the field to kill, or to be killed, and make it a rule to spare no man."

"What if this fellow refuses to meet me, Caldwell?"

"Well, sir, you will have done your duty."

"Yes, and I half-believe that he will refuse, for he knows something of my skill, and one of the middies told me the men were discussing my fatality as a duelist the other night, and that Stanwood heard it all, so he may be frightened off."

"Perhaps, but he does not strike me as a man to be readily frightened, Sir Bradwyn."

"No, nor me; but we will see to-morrow—oh! there comes a breeze, so we can reach Callao to-morrow," and pleased with the prospect of an affair of honor, which would enable him to wipe out the stain of a double insult, Sir Bradwyn Brule began to pace the deck with a positive look of pleasure upon his countenance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHALLENGE.

THE brig Shark arrived in Callao port the next morning, and after a farewell to Captain Kane and his officers, excepting Sir Bradwyn, Noel Stanwood went ashore, followed by a cheer from the crew.

He found comfortable quarters, and managed to find at the store of a Portuguese Jew a sailor suit, in which he at once attired himself.

There was a British frigate in port, and she carried the pennant of a commodore, and the officers of the brig were most glad to find friends and a countryman there, and more, the Shark's crew soon heard other stories told of that marvel of the sea, the Silver Ship, now firmly believed to be as thoroughly a specter craft as the Flying Dutchman ever was in the minds of the good sailors a century and more ago.

Having bought his outfit, for it will be remembered that he boarded the brig with the slimest of wardrobes, Noel Stanwood sought along the shipping to see what craft he could find homeward-bound.

The money advanced him by Lord Erskine made him independent, so that if he could not get a berth as mate on some craft, he could buy a passage to some other port and thence homeward, for he had decided to return and face the ordeal of his having, as he firmly believed, killed Frank Farley.

Not a seaman had spoken of hearing of the affair, and he had not questioned any one of them, but the hints of Sir Bradwyn Brule that he had left on account of a crime, had caused him to feel that his deed was known to some of the officers at least.

That he had given the lie to Sir Bradwyn, had defended himself against attack, broken the officer's sword and slapped him sharply on the side of the face, he did not regret, for he knew that the man had spoken falsely in saying that Pearl Revere was his promised wife and had kissed him good-by.

Still the thought of the assertion made him feel most uncomfortable, and he was anxious to return home.

Rumors of war were also floating about, that the Colonies would resist the taxes forced upon them by the king, and take up arms to gain their rights, and he wished to be with his countrymen in the struggle.

He recalled how he had been wounded and robbed one night in Rio, and what hardships he had endured, since giving the barque over to the Government, and he longed to once more see the dear ones at home.

So were his thoughts wandering, when he strolled along the shore looking at the shipping in port, and suddenly halted as he heard his name called.

Turning he beheld Lord Erskine, and greeted him pleasantly.

"I was looking for you, Mr. Stanwood, for I learn that Lieutenant Casper Caldwell came ashore from the brig with a challenge for you."

"Indeed, sir, and from Sir Bradwyn, I suppose?" was the cool reply, and Lord Erskine mentally observed:

"They are mistaken if they think to frighten this man."

"Yes, and as you are a stranger here, I thought I would offer my services as a friend."

"You are more than kind to me, my lord, and I appreciate all you are doing for me."

"Is there no way to avoid this meeting?"

"Except to back down."

"You mean refuse to fight?"

"Exactly."

"Well I cannot do that, for I gave the lie to Sir Bradwyn, and believe that he uttered one, in fact know that he did, and that he said what he did simply to provoke me to some act for which I could be punished."

"But for Captain Kane's way of treating the matter I could have been severely dealt with, for I did do that which has hanged many a poor seaman."

"You defended your life, and well too."

"That was natural; but the slap I gave him I guess stings worse than all—fortunately I did not lose my temper, or I would have pitched him into the sea."

There was no braggadocio in the way in which this was said, but simply the utterance of a man who knew his own capabilities, and so Lord Erskine understood it.

"Well, he will challenge you, in fact Caldwell is looking for you now."

"Let me save him extra trouble, with your consent."

"Certainly; but, as the challenged party you will of course have choice of weapons."

"That is a matter of perfect indifference to me, my lord."

"Ah! you understand the finer use of a pistol and sword then?"

"Yes, sir."

"I feared that you did not, as you had not been educated for a war-ship or the army."

"My father was a superior swordsman and a dead shot, and he considered that all gentlemen should be accomplished in that way, so taught me, sir."

"I saw you handle a cutlass, but could not tell whether it was power or skill in your blows."

"Perhaps both, my lord; but yonder is Lieutenant Caldwell."

The latter saw them as they caught sight of him, and after exchanging greetings the lieutenant remarked:

"I have been to your quarters, Mr. Stanwood, for I am the bearer of an unpleasant message to you."

"Indeed, Lieutenant Caldwell, and may I ask its nature?"

"I am commissioned by Sir Bradwyn Brule, to demand that you meet him on the field of honor at your earliest convenience, and with what weapons you may deem fit to select, and thus give him the chance to wipe out the insults you put upon him."

"I am wholly at the service of Sir Bradwyn Brule, Lieutenant Caldwell, if he will waive the fact that I have to fight him in a simple sailor suit, which will look odd when pitted against his brilliant uniform."

"May I refer you to Lord Erskine as my friend, for I feel sure that one who has so befriended me in our short acquaintance, will not desert me now."

It was cleverly put to avoid allowing Caldwell to suppose Lord Erskine had told of the mission of his lieutenant.

"I shall be glad to serve you, Mr. Stanwood, for I have not forgotten that the debt I owe you is my life."

"I am also under the same indebtedness to Mr. Stanwood, so regret to have to serve his enemy; but he understands my position, I hope."

"Perfectly, sir."

"As I am to confer with you, my lord, let me ask what weapons are the choice of your friend?"

"May I suggest swords, Mr. Stanwood, with a resort to pistols if a second meeting is demanded by either party?"

"Certainly, anything suits me, my lord, so please yourself and I am content."

"Swords then, Caldwell, with pistols in reserve, and Mr. Stanwood can use my rapiers and dueling-pistols, which both you and Sir Bradwyn know well."

"And the hour?"

"Sunset this day, on the beach yonder behind that old adobe chapel, or within its walls would be better perhaps."

"That is suitable as a place, and we will be there on time."

"And we will not be late; but, Caldwell, we must arrange with some of the junior officers, as this meeting draws us three seniors away, and Captain Kane is to dine with Commodore Tate on his frigate."

"Yes, sir, it will be Sir Bradwyn's watch, but he has already arranged with his pet middy, Hammond, to stand his watch for him the hour he will be away."

Noel Stanwood smiled and said quickly:

"Yes, it does not take long, sir, to put a man

out of the way," and with a bow he passed on with Lord Erskine, who, having leave for the afternoon, did not return to the brig, but sent a message off to his servant to come ashore with his rapiers and dueling-pistols.

Two hours after the two, Lord Erskine and Noel Stanwood, stood in the ruins of the old adobe chapel, watching the sun as it neared the horizon, and waiting the coming of a boat that was visible pulling rapidly along the shore toward the rendezvous appointed for the meeting of life and death.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MEETING IN THE RUINED CHAPEL.

"THERE are four officers in the boat, my lord," said Stanwood, as he cast a quick glance at the four-oared boat coming along the shore.

"You are right, Stanwood, four oarsmen, a coxswain and four officers—yes, Sir Bradwyn, Caldwell, and two officers from the frigate, for I know them, one being a Lieutenant Bonair, and the other the ship's sawbones."

"The surgeon?"

"Yes, and the boat in fact belongs to the frigate."

"This is wrong in Sir Bradwyn, for nothing was said of others, though these men are royal good fellows; but Sir Bradwyn must not have his way in this affair."

"Do not object upon my account, pray, for I have no objection to his friends," was the cool reply.

"If you do, I shall have them retire."

"No, let them come, and in fact it may be just as well to have a surgeon, for I had not thought of that," and Stanwood smiled in a way that encouraged Lord Erskine as to his nerve not failing him at the presence of his adversary.

The boat soon grounded upon the beach and the officers sprung ashore, and it was now seen that a midshipman from the frigate had also come along, but in the group in the stern-sheets had not been noticed.

Lord Erskine's face flushed with anger, as he stepped forward, and saluting the party of five politely said:

"Sir Bradwyn Brule, you have been in a sufficient number of affairs of this kind not to break the laws of the code by bringing friends to the field, and you may as well understand that when I am Mr. Stanwood's second this duel is to be conducted in the most proper manner."

"I beg your pardon, Lord Erskine, but just as we were about to leave the brig, Lieutenant Bonair and Surgeon Deas called upon me, while Midshipman Lumley came in charge of the boat, and I suggested that these gentlemen accompany us ashore, subject to your desire whether they remain or not, and Bonair extended the courtesy of his boat, and Surgeon Deas of his professional services, which perhaps your friend may be glad to avail himself of," and there was a wicked smile upon the face of Brule at his significant hint as to Stanwood's needing the surgeon's aid.

"Under the circumstances I accept your explanation, Sir Bradwyn Brule, and Bonair I am glad to see you, as also you, Surgeon Deas and Midshipman Lumley—permit me to present you to my esteemed friend, Captain Stanwood, of the American Merchant Marine Service, and to whose courage we owe the safety of our vessel and our lives."

The last words were a hit back at Brule, and his face flushed, for he understood that Lord Erskine meant that the officers from the frigate should see that he was decidedly the friend of the American in the affair.

Stanwood met the officers pleasantly, with not a trace of nervousness, bowed smilingly to Lieutenant Caldwell, and engaged Lieutenant Bonair in conversation, while the two seconds stepped apart and arranged the preliminaries, and Surgeon Deas prepared his case of instruments, which he had stopped by the frigate to secure.

The crew of the boat looked on with interest, from an archway in the ruined chapel, and the middy called the coxswain to him and coolly offered to bet him his month's pay against his, the coxswain's, that one of the two duelists would be killed, but which one he would not wager upon.

But, though flattered at the middy's offer, the coxswain remained on the safe side and did not accept the wager.

"That American has got heaps of grit, coxswain, and if he has skill with it, the chances are that Sir Bradwyn will never be a captain."

"Yes, sir, and he's got the devil down deep in his eyes, for all his sweet smile and pleasant ways to Lieutenant Bonair, sir," replied the coxswain.

The seconds now appeared, having arranged the preliminaries, and the weapons selected were Sir Bradwyn's own rapier and one of Sir Erskine's, which Lieutenant Caldwell had brought from the brig.

Should they fail to settle the affair to the satisfaction of the adversaries, then dueling-pistols were to be used, and again Brule was to use his own weapon, and Stanwood that of Sir Erskine.

Both sword and pistol had served him well in other affairs, Sir Bradwyn remarked to Sur-

geon Deas, and in a tone that he meant Stanwood should hear.

"When I use my own weapons fortune always favors me," he added, with a confident smile.

It was evident that Lord Erskine was getting angry with his brother officer, but he could neither say or do aught then, so let it pass with the remark to Stanwood:

"He seeks to unnerve you; but he is a dangerous man with a blade, as I told you, and you must be on your guard."

"Thank you; but what a superb weapon," and he glanced at the sword Lord Erskine placed in his hand with real admiration.

"Yes, it is true and perfect—are you ready?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"What a charming fellow, Lord Erskine; it is a pity to see him pitted against such a terrible hand with the sword as Brule," said Lieutenant Bonair, in a whisper.

"It does not seem just fair, but we'll soon know, and if he disarms him, Brule must spare him, or he'll have me to fight," was the low reply of Lord Erskine.

Sir Bradwyn now had his sword in hand, and felt of it like a man who loved it for the services it had rendered him.

The two men now saluted, and like two lightning flashes the blades came together with a clang that made the sparks fly.

Instantly Sir Bradwyn began to press his foe and show his splendid play, but before a minute had passed the anxious look left the face of Lord Erskine, and Lieutenant Bonair whispered to the middy:

"Youngster, the American is Brule's match."

The confident face of the officer, his supercilious smile, worn at the commencement, now began to show signs of realizing that he had despised a foe who was his equal with a blade.

In fact he soon began to feel himself taxed to parry the blade of his adversary, and a moment after began to give ground, his face livid with fury.

As for Stanwood, he had known his wondrous powers, that those who had ever crossed blades with him had told him he was a phenomenon with a blade, and his father, himself a master, had told him never to dread meeting any man with cutlass, short-sword or rapier.

When he saw that his superior strength and endurance, in spite of his not being in form, was beginning to tell upon the lieutenant, Noel Stanwood decided to quickly end the duel by showing that he had been playing with the man who had expected to make him an easy prey to his skill.

He saw that Brule meant to kill him, if he could, that if he allowed him the slightest vantage he would run him through the heart, and to bumble him he now began to drive him backward, showing a skill that won the admiration and amazement of all present, and caused the coxswain to curse himself for not taking the middy's bet.

At last he sent the sword of his adversary flying upward into the air, and as it came down caught the hilt, turned the weapon quickly, and handing it to his antagonist, said, in the quietest manner possible:

"I give you your sword with your life, Sir Bradwyn Brule, and permit me to add that you handle a weapon grandly."

"Curse you! I want no compliments from you, sir, and as steel has failed me, I will see what lead can do to avenge my dishonor at being disarmed by such as you."

The words were hissed forth savagely, and it could be seen that they disgusted even the seamen, while Lord Erskine said, sternly:

"Lieutenant Caldwell, I decline to let my friend, Mr. Stanwood, meet a man again who has just proven that he has no longer a claim to the title of a gentleman or the rank of a British officer."

CHAPTER XXV.

TWO SHOTS.

"GREAT heavens, Enders, but you are cutting," said Lieutenant Bonair at the words of Lord Erskine, who replied:

"I mean just what I say, for Sir Bradwyn Brule, unless he apologizes at once for his insulting words to my friend Mr. Stanwood, shall never again be trusted by me as a gentleman."

Sir Bradwyn Brule saw at once how unmanly had been his words, but he meant to brave them through.

He was cut to the quick by the indignant speech of Lord Erskine, but he was bent upon taking the life of Noel Stanwood, and then he would settle with the nobleman, whom he did not doubt but that he could disarm and give his life, thus regain his good will once more.

"If I am forced to kill him, why it will be an easy way to square my indebtedness to him; but now for that fellow who is such a very devil with a sword."

"My God! that he should disarm me!"

Such were the thoughts that flashed like lightning through his brain; but he said in his bitter, cynical way:

"Lieutenant Caldwell, pray say to my Lord Erskine Enders, that my quarrel is not now with him; but after I have dealt with this low-

bred American, I will be at his service for his insulting words to me."

"At present we will get this matter with Sailor Stanwood off our hands."

"I think, Sir Bradwyn, under the circumstances, that you can hardly expect Mr. Stanwood to meet you again," Caspar Caldwell replied.

"It was our agreement, to try lead if steel failed us, sir."

"It is as Mr. Stanwood pleases now, Lieutenant Brule," returned Caldwell.

Noel Stanwood had stood wholly unmoved, after having disarmed his adversary, and given him his sword with his life.

But his eyes had flashed wickedly, all saw, at the insulting reception of his noble act, and the manner in which the officer had jerked the weapon from his hand.

At Lord Erskine's sharp, rebuking retort to Sir Bradwyn Brule for his conduct he seemed about to speak, but checked himself and remained silent until Lieutenant Caldwell turned toward him.

Then he said in a manner that seemed wholly indifferent:

"As your friend seems to demand another meeting, Lieutenant Caldwell, I will waive the fact that he is no gentleman and grant it with real pleasure."

Brule gritted his teeth with rage at this; while Lord Erskine said sharply:

"No, Stanwood, I insist not."

"But I insist that Sir Bradwyn Brule be gratified," was the low reply, and Lieutenant Bonair whispered to the surgeon:

"The American intends to kill him now if he can."

"He deserves it, sir," Surgeon Deas returned in the same low tone.

"If the Yankee can; but no one man can handle two weapons with the skill he did the sword," put in the middy, who gave a reproachful glance at the coxswain for not taking his wager.

"Do you hear, Caldwell, he insists," cried Sir Bradwyn.

"Sir Erskine, do you withdraw from your position?" asked Caldwell.

"I stand by my friend, Lieutenant Caldwell," and with this he took his pistols from their case.

The weapons were loaded, that of Lord Erskine's for Stanwood, Sir Bradwyn's own weapon for himself, and the ground was paced off, ten paces being the distance.

Caldwell won the toss for the word, and the principals were placed in position, Stanwood unconcerned, and Sir Bradwyn a picture of fiendish hatred.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" came in the sharp voice of Lieutenant Caldwell, just as the sun touched the horizon, and breaking through a cloud, shone through an arched window and fell upon Noel Stanwood.

Lord Erskine would have stopped the duel had he dared, for the light upon him placed his principal at a terrible disadvantage, and all present, knowing Sir Bradwyn's deadly aim, looked upon Stanwood's calm face as though they were looking upon the face of the dead.

Sir Bradwyn saw also his advantage, and a wicked smile curled his lips.

Then came the other word, so fatal in its meaning, after a silence of a few seconds that were appalling:

"Fire."

The pistols rose to a level, and the trigger of one was pressed first, and the shot that followed was aimless, worthless, for it was fired by a finger whose death clutch pulled the trigger. Without a word, a moan, only a wild look, Sir Bradwyn Brule sunk dead in his tracks, and a small red stain in the very center of his forehead showed that the aim of the American was as marvelous as was his swordsmanship.

"I am sorry, Lord Erskine, but he forced me to kill him!" said Noel Stanwood, and then he stepped forward and bent over the dead form just as Surgeon Deas laid his finger upon the pulseless wrist.

"He is dead, sir," said the surgeon in a whisper.

"Oh yes, I know that, sir," was the reply, and Noel Stanwood gently unbuttoned the uniform coat and drew from an inner pocket a velvet case.

"Lieutenant Caldwell, I claim this miniature as my property, for it was given to me by the lady whom it represents, and by some means, known only to this dead man, came into his possession."

"But, Mr. Stanwood, I cannot permit you—"

"Sir, dare to touch this miniature, and you shall answer to me this very minute!"

The voice of Noel Stanwood rung out like bugle notes, and Lord Erskine said quickly:

"Caldwell, I know this to be the property of Mr. Stanwood, so will be responsible for his taking it."

"Certainly, my lord, I do not doubt Mr. Stanwood for a moment, only I deemed it my duty to hold the miniature as Sir Bradwyn's second, but of course he can keep it as it is his own."

"Thank you, sir," and Noel Stanwood bowed coldly, and turning to Lord Erskine said earnestly:

"My lord, I thank you most sincerely for all your kindness to me, and I trust to meet you one of these days in Boston."

"Should you arrive there before me, pray call upon my mother and sister, and tell them that you have seen me."

"I will certainly do so, Stanwood; but do you not wish me to accompany you up to the town?"

"No, thank you, for I well know your duty calls you on board the brig, especially now that her first officer is no more."

"Good-by," and with a grasp of the nobleman's hand and raising his tarpaulin to the others present, Noel Stanwood turned on his heel and walked away in the gathering twilight.

"That is a remarkable man, Erskine," said Lieutenant Bonair.

"A remarkable man, indeed, Bonair, and I wish him every success," was the reply.

"I think we shall soon see him again, for Captain Kane will not allow the death of Brule to pass quietly by," Lieutenant Caldwell remarked.

"When we have both made our report, Caldwell, I do not see how Captain Kane can interfere," Lord Erskine rejoined.

"Nor I," added Lieutenant Bonair.

"No, a fairer duel I never saw; but, gentlemen, the seamen have borne the body to the boat, and without hurrying you, I would say that a little brandy and water will just pick us up nicely, after what we have seen," said Surgeon Deas, and the middy muttered:

"That's the best prescription you ever gave, old Sawbones."

And then the party went to the boat, which at once pulled slowly away toward the brig, all saddened by what had occurred, except Midshipman Lumley, who was angry with the coxswain for not having accepted his wager of a month's pay that one of the duelists would be killed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ARREST.

DUELING was a very common affair a hundred years ago, and in fact until after the late civil war in the South, "affairs of honor" were of frequent occurrence in the Southern States.

The duel, therefore, between Sir Bradwyn Brule and Noel Stanwood, fought in a foreign land, would not have attracted so much attention, but for the fact that it had peculiar phases connected with it.

Noel Stanwood was an American, of the merchant service, and over whom, just exactly why, no one seemed to know, a cloud hung.

It was the talk of his affair with Merchant Frank Farley according to the rumors which that individual had set afloat, that the officers of the brig had heard talked of, but they did not seem to recall more than the fact that Stanwood had been forced to fly from the country.

Then Sir Bradwyn was an officer of the Royal Navy, and bitterness between the British and Americans was beginning to be considered as a matter of course.

Stanwood too had served on the brig, and while doing so had severely handled Sir Bradwyn, his superior officer, no matter what cause the latter had given for his act.

Then a duel had followed and the American had killed the British baronet and king's officer.

Such was the way it all went to Commodore Tate, and the old man was a martinet, and a very severe man when aroused.

He could not see Lord Erskine's argument in favor of his friend, for the nobleman went to the frigate to report the duel to Captain Kane, after leaving the body of Sir Bradwyn on board the brig.

Lieutenant Bonair, Surgeon Deas and Midshipman Lumley also reported how the whole affair occurred, and Lieutenant Caldwell was sent for to give his version as Sir Bradwyn's second.

Of course he was in a degree prejudiced and said nothing in favor of Stanwood, yet also nothing against him.

The result was that the old commodore became very bitter in his denunciation of the "murderous Yankee" as he called him, and in spite of Captain Kane's and Lord Erskine's pleading for Stanwood, ordered Lieutenant Bonair to take a file of men ashore, arrest the American and take him on board the brig-of-war.

Once there the captain was ordered to put him in irons and carry him back to Boston, where the charges against him were to be "insulting, striking a superior officer, disarming him upon the quarter-deck and breaking his sword, throwing the pieces into the sea, after which he fought a duel with said officer and maliciously killed him."

In vain did Captain Kane aver that Stanwood was not an enlisted man on board the brig, but simply favoring him by serving for him.

The commodore would not hear to any excuse, and Lieutenant Bonair was sent to obey the

orders given him and it was with reluctance that he did so, for he had come to admire Stanwood as a splendid specimen of a man.

In the mean time after his duel, Stanwood had strolled on back into the town.

He saw the lights from the ships glimmering on the harbor, and regretted that he was not again afloat, for he was a born sailor and loved the sea devotedly.

Then he went up to the public house where he had gotten quarters, and had supper.

But he had little desire to eat, for his thoughts were none of the pleasantest.

Again he walked out and began to glance over the harbor.

Suddenly he saw a boat, coming shoreward.

"It's a man-of-war's boat from the stroke."

"Doubtless from the frigate," he said, and soon after the boat landed near where he stood.

By the light of a battle lantern carried in the boat he recognized Lieutenant Bonair and called to him as he sprung ashore, determined to ask him to request Lord Erskine to visit him on the morrow, as he had discovered that he could not sail from Callao for some weeks, and knowing that the brig would reach Boston long before he did, he wished to send letters to his mother and sister by the nobleman.

So he stepped down to meet the lieutenant, who started slightly at seeing him, and said:

"Ah, Captain Stanwood, you are the very man I am looking for."

"Indeed, sir, and how can I serve you?"

"I'll tell you, Stanwood, that I have got a damnable disagreeable duty to perform, but Old Yard-Arm, as we call our commodore, is as mad as a Turk at the duel this afternoon, sees only that you are to blame, and in spite of your warm defenders, Captaine Kane and Lord Erskine, and my humble self, demands your instant arrest and that you be taken on board the brig and put in irons."

"Indeed! Commodore Tate certainly carries a very high and unjust hand in this act; but as I am powerless to resist, I submit, feeling for you, Lieutenant Bonair, in the disagreeable duty you have to perform.

"I am your prisoner, sir; but I would like to return to my quarters for my traps."

"Certainly, and I will accompany you, while a man can go along to bring your kit."

"Men, you remain here, but coxswain, send a stout fellow along with me for Captain Stanwood's luggage."

Noel Stanwood appreciated the kindness of the lieutenant in not placing him under a guard, and the two walked away together.

Half an hour after Stanwood went over the side of the brig and was conducted to the cabin, where Captain Kane was pacing to and fro, evidently deeply moved.

"My dear Stanwood, God knows I regret this affair more than I can express to you, while Lord Erskine went ashore to look you up and give you a chance to escape, but missing finding you, the warning could not be given.

"The commodore takes the crudest view of the duel, reflecting wholly upon you, and asserts that if you were *acting* as a warrant officer, you were in reality one, and so are guilty of mutiny.

"So he demands that I place you under arrest, and in irons, and I must obey, much as I regret the painful duty."

"Captain Kane, I am here, sir, to accept the consequences of my act, and I hope that you will make no difference in my case, but do your duty wholly."

"I am ready, sir, to be put in irons."

"Well, I will not place you below decks, and allow you what liberty I can, by confining you in the steerage officers' quarters."

"But I fear that the commodore will severely prejudice your case, as he will be in Boston long before our arrival, he having ordered me to cruise slowly through the West India waters, pirate-hunting."

"I must take the consequences, Captain Kane, be they what they may."

"I am ready, sir," and Noel Stanwood was led below and ironed to a bolt in the floor of the small state-room assigned to him, and that the crew knew the situation and felt for him in his position, was evidenced at once by their kindness to him and words of sympathy, for the gallant tars had sincerely hated Sir Bradwyn Brule, and his death had caused not a single regret forward of the steerage.

The next day the brig sailed on her cruise, and Noel Stanwood found himself going back home in irons, accused of mutiny and murder upon the high seas.

CHAPTER XXVII.

UGLY RUMORS.

THE cloud of war hovering over America had burst at last, for a riot in New York, where the soldiers had been fought by the Colonists, and another scene of violence in Boston between the citizens and the British troops, had kindled the fire of patriotism in the hearts of the Americans, which had soon after broken into a flame in the battles of Concord and Lexington.

Bunker Hill had been the scene of another desperate fight, which reflected glory upon the Colonists, though a victory for the British.

Washington had been chosen commander of the American Army, and Lord Howe had been forced into a siege in the city of Boston, which city was no more than an armed camp.

The American citizens who had remained true to the king, were in high feather with the king, while the patriot families were under a strict and painful surveillance by the red-coats, as the British were called.

Along the coast, fleet, though small, American vessels were creeping out to sea as privateers, the Continental Congress in Philadelphia were building and equipping war vessels to fight the king's cruisers upon the sea, and the name of John Paul Jones was becoming known in the land, for already had he planted the flag of a new nation in the faces of the king's officers.

Such was the situation in Boston at the time of the arrival of the frigate British King, after a long cruise, in which she had visited far southern waters.

She flew a commodore's pennant, for there had been a fleet of five vessels to start upon the cruise, all the others having been left at various stations assigned to them.

The brig-of-war Shark, sent out to meet the British King with dispatches, had been ordered upon special duty, while the commodore, having completed his cruise, sailed straight for Boston, to refit and add to his crew.

The commodore had captured an American privateer which had run under his guns in a fog, and thus brought in a prize, and from the rebel captain he had heard the situation of affairs, and that the Americans had at last thrown off the yoke of royalty.

The old commodore fumed terribly at the news, and came within an ace of hanging the privateer captain as a pirate, but changed his mind, and had cause to congratulate himself afterward that he had done so.

The news at once spread through the town that the once popular sailor, Noel Stanwood, who had taken the barque out to South America, had left her there, and had then joined, through circumstances, the nature of which were quite dim, a band of pirates on the Peruvian Coast.

The presence of the brig Shark, of the Royal Navy, on the coast, had caused him to desert the pirates, and joining the British vessel, to make known a plot for her capture by Peruvian buccaneers, hoping thereby to gain pardon for his own acts.

He had fought on the brig when she was attacked by the pirates, but had afterward shown his mutinous disposition, and struck the first officer of the Shark, wrenching his sword from him and casting it into the sea, and then escaped from the brig upon arriving at Callao, in Peru.

Sir Bradwyn Brule, a popular and well-known officer of the Royal Navy, had been the one who had fallen under the displeasure of the mutineer, Stanwood, and in attempting his arrest in Callao had met with his death at the hands of the daring and lawless American sailor.

But the mutineer had been captured by the brig's commander, and was being brought back to Boston in the Shark, in irons and for trial, which could but result in one way, the hanging of Noel Stanwood.

Such was the garbled statement of the affair in Peru, and to add to it, the old rumor that Noel Stanwood had attempted to assassinate Merchant Frank Farley, to whom the Stanwood family owed what little they possessed, was ruined, and the young sailor was painted as black almost as it was possible for calumny to make him.

When questioned upon the subject, by old friends who had known Noel Stanwood intimately in his days of prosperity, the officers of the frigate had little to say, other than that he was in irons on board the Shark, for having killed Sir Bradwyn Brule, the first officer of the brig.

But there were two exceptions to these, and they were Lieutenant Brainard Bonair and Midshipman Allan Lumley, both of whom gave the true facts of the case, but their testimony was considered for naught, when it was better for the British and traitor Americans to believe all the wrong of an American, and many even asserted that they had always known that Noel Stanwood would end his career upon the gallows.

Prince Paul Revere was, as has been said, a prominent man among the British, and he held an official position under the king.

At his home, therefore, the news the frigate brought was at once known, and Commodore Tate, dining there, had told the story of Stanwood's mutiny as he saw it, and which was not exactly according to the facts of the case.

He had entered upon an abuse of "the mutineer American," as he called him, when Pearl said quietly, but in a manner that showed her earnestness, after she had waited for her father to speak, and he did not do so:

"Commodore Tate, you must pardon me if I say I do not think Captain Noel Stanwood should be prejudged, but the verdict of his trial should be awaited."

"Ah! he has a defender in your fair daughter, I see, Mr. Revere," said the commodore.

Paul Revere looked annoyed, and gave Pearl an admonishing glance, which she did not heed, as she continued:

"I have known Captain Stanwood since I was a little girl, and I owe it to him that I was not torn to pieces by a savage dog, which he threw himself upon, and held at the risk of his own life to save mine."

"His sister is my most intimate friend, and I do not believe that he is, or can be guilty of one dishonorable or mean act, and I will not consider him guilty until he is proven so by evidence that is beyond all cavil."

The commodore saw breakers ahead, and like a wise sailor tacked ship and took another course, by saying:

"Perhaps I was wrong, Miss Revere, to be severe upon him; but then Sir Bradwyn Brule was a pet of mine, and I am also very merciless to a man who breaks through the barrier of discipline; but we will wait and see what the verdict is."

Pearl simply bowed, and leaving the gentlemen soon after at the table, she threw on her wrap and started for the cottage of Mrs. Stanwood, for she did not consider the commodore and several others present at dinner her guests.

Ethel was seated in front of the cottage, sewing, when Pearl came, and quickly arose to meet her, for she was all alone, her mother having gone down into the town to make some purchases, she said, but really to learn the truth of the rumors which old Bennett had told her had been brought by the frigate, British King.

Until she knew the truth she cared not to alarm Ethel, and so had slipped away quietly to ask Frank Farley to get the full statement for her of the stories floating about regarding her noble son.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

PEARL advanced rapidly toward Ethel, and took a seat by her side, while she said, earnestly:

"Ethel, I have run away from home for a few minutes, to tell you something I learned to-day."

"It must worry you, Pearl, for you look really distressed."

"It does worry me, but it will doubtless not be as bad as I fear."

"Do you remember the large, weather-beaten frigate we saw come into the harbor a few days ago?"

"Yes, she appeared as though just off of a long cruise and held an armed schooner following close in her wake."

"Yes, a prize, for it was an American privateer which she had captured in a fog."

"I am so sorry."

"Yes, but neither the capturing of their privateers, nor defeating them in battle will prevent the patriots from winning their cause in the end; but I must not talk so, for you know it is treason to the king, and father is a good royalist, so his daughter should be also, if she has no mind of her own."

"But that frigate, Ethel, was the British King, the flagship of commodore Tate, a severe old officer, but a brave and good man I am sure, though his officers call him Old Yard-Arm, he is so terrible as a commander and to evil-doers."

"Well, he dined with father to-day, along with a lot of other old fogies and royalists, and he told a story of meeting the brig Shark in Peruvian waters."

"The brig which was the pirate schooner that brother Noel captured?"

"Yes, she sailed some six weeks after Noel did, and the commodore says he met her at Callao, Peru, and it seems that in some way Noel had gotten on board the brig."

"Noel!"

"Yes, and there are a dozen reports of how he did so, and all that, all of which of course are utterly false; but he was on the brig, and it is said, remember, mentioned—"

"Oh, Pearl!"

"Don't get alarmed, my dear Ethel, for you know this is reported only, and from British sources at that."

"He struck Lieutenant Sir Bradwyn Brule, who you know came here with me one day, when you were out, and who is perfectly horrid— Oh! but I forgot, for he is dead, as it is said that Noel killed him."

"Oh, Pearl!"

"Now, don't worry in the least, Ethel, for see how calm I am, and the commodore, I am sure, is prejudiced, for he hates Americans, is such a terrible disciplinarian, and more, Sir Bradwyn was a favorite officer of his."

"He told me, or rather all of us, that Sir Bradwyn had resented the blow struck him by Noel, by challenging him to fight a duel, and that he had killed the British officer, and he was going on to try and hang Noel without any mercy, when, as father did not speak up, I did, and I silenced the old warship with one broadside, for he hauled out of action, as he would say, for all his conversation smacks of the sea."

"Ah, Pearl, I fear my brother has gotten into some fearful trouble."

"Yes, he is in trouble, but you may be sure that Noel is too cool-headed to have gone far wrong, and when the brig comes his trial will prove this—but see, there comes an officer."

A gentleman in naval uniform halted at the gate, raised his hat and entered, while he said:

"May I ask if Mrs. Stanwood resides here?"

"Yes, sir; my mother is out, but I am Miss Stanwood."

"I am glad to meet you, Miss Stanwood. I am Lieutenant Brainard Bonair of the Royal Navy and the frigate British King, and I have come to see your mother and yourself upon a matter of importance."

"I am glad to see you, sir, and permit me to present you to my friend, Miss Revere."

The officer bowed low, and mentally registered an oath that never had he met in his life two more beautiful girls than those now before him.

"My excuse for calling, Miss Stanwood, is on account of certain ugly rumors afloat regarding your brother, which make him out all that is terrible, and upon which I can place the brand of untruth, which I feel would be pleasant for you to know."

"Ah, sir, you are most kind, and Miss Revere was just telling me of the sad tidings regarding my poor brother, which she learned from Commodore Tate."

"Ah, yes, the commodore is dining with Mr. Paul Revere to-day; but I must say that his views of Mr. Stanwood's case are through clouded eyes, as he is not a man to reason with once he has made up his mind in a case."

"I have no other reason for breaking in upon your privacy, Miss Stanwood, than that I have heard a score of the worst kind of rumors against your brother, and having met him the day we sailed from Callao, and knowing the truth, I came to tell you just how matters stood, that you need not be harassed with greater anxiety than is natural in your case as Mr. Stanwood's sister."

The tears came into the eyes of Ethel, and she could not speak her thanks, so silently held out her hand, while Pearl said:

"Your kindness, Lieutenant Bonair, I also appreciate, with Miss Stanwood, for Captain Stanwood is like a—a brother to me, I having known him since childhood."

"Permit me, then, to tell my version of the whole affair, and to state that Mr. Stanwood has warm friends even upon the vessel he is now a prisoner on."

"To tell my story in justice to Mr. Stanwood, I must begin with his misfortunes after having taken the barque out from here to South America," and just as he had heard the whole story from Lord Erskine, Brainard Bonair told it to the two girls, of how Noel had been wounded and robbed, captured by pirates, and then his escape and swimming out to warn the brig through a bay infested with sharks.

Then the battle with the pirates, the manner in which the brig was saved through Noel Stanwood, his taking the berth of boatswain, and his treatment by Sir Bradwyn Brule, until it culminated in the scene on the quarter-deck and the duel, all was told in the frank manner of the sailor with a desire throughout to do full justice to a man who he felt was wronged most cruelly by the circumstances in which accident had placed him.

"I saw the duel myself, ladies," he continued, "and I never saw more generosity than Mr. Stanwood exhibited to his enemy, while his swordsmanship was something grand, I assure you."

"When he spared Sir Bradwyn, the insult he received then and there caused Lord Erskine to bitterly resent it, and had not Mr. Stanwood killed Brule, then he and Lord Erskine would have fought."

"Now, I have known Lord Erskine Enders for many years, and he is the equal of any man, I believe, with a sword and pistol, excepting Stanwood, so Sir Bradwyn would have found him a most dangerous foe."

"But this Mr. Stanwood did not know, and that influenced him, he told me, in taking the life of Brule, as he feared Lord Erskine might meet more than his match, for he spoke most highly of his adversary's skill."

"The whole affair was unfortunate, and I regret exceedingly that I was forced to make the arrest."

"When the brig arrives, however, I feel sure that justice must prevail, for Lord Erskine will see to it that every officer and man on the Shark are brought as witnesses for Mr. Stanwood, while Surgeon Deas, Midshipman Lumley, myself, and the crew of the boat will give testimony favorable, added to which will be the fact that he saved the brig from the pirates, and was not really entered on the vessel as an enlisted seaman when he resented the words of Sir Bradwyn Brule."

"You said that it was about a lady's picture?" asked Pearl, anxiously.

"Yes, Miss Revere; Brule brought his desk on deck, Lord Erskine said, and exhibited a miniature in a velvet case, and said that it was his lady-love, and that the memory of her sweet farewell yet lingered with him."

"Then he was asked who she was, and turning

to Boatswain Stanwood, who was near, said that he could tell.

"Stanwood had heard his words, recognized the lady, and the miniature as one given to him, so gave the lie to Brule, who sprung at him with his sword, but was disarmed, his weapon broken and cast into the sea, and given a stinging blow in the face.

"He was put in irons until Captain Kane heard the case, and was then released as not having been a regular seaman, and going ashore in Callao, was challenged by Brule, with the result I have mentioned."

"And the miniature, sir?"

"Mr. Stanwood took it from the body of Brule after he fell, and said that it was his property, the lady who gave it to him having borrowed it to have one painted from it, and in coming hastily to sea he had not gotten it before his departure."

"Captain Stanwood was right, Lieutenant Bonair, for the miniature was one of myself, and I came here one day to return it to Miss Stanwood, Sir Bradwyn Brule accompanying me, and he put it into his pocket."

"As Miss Stanwood was not at home the miniature was forgotten, and the officer carried it to sea with him, while as to his farewell, he doubtless did remember it to his dying day, as it was by no means complimentary to him."

"This much I can state if needed as a witness for Captain Stanwood, while I can give you the facts regarding his hasty departure, as a compact of secrecy between three of us has been broken by the gentleman, Mr. Frank Farley, who has persistently falsified the character of Captain Stanwood."

"Your testimony will indeed be valuable, Miss Revere," answered Lieutenant Bonair, and soon after he took his departure, while Mrs. Stanwood returning home, almost prostrated by Frank Farley's story of her son's deeds, was overjoyed to know the truth, and that Noel was not to be deserted in his hour of need to the merciless clutches of a few enemies.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FAIR PLEADER.

FINDING that Pearl did not return to the parlors, and when sent for, the answer returned that she begged to be excused, for her faithful maid had her orders, the commodore felt that he had made a mistake in attacking the young American sailor, and said as much to her father.

Paul Revere admitted that his daughter felt most kindly toward the young sailor, as he also did, and said that he himself would have to receive very strong evidence that Stanwood would be guilty of an act of dishonesty.

When at last the guests left, and Paul Revere sat alone in the gathering twilight, Pearl glided into the room.

She had just returned from the Stanwood cottage, and her father, after greeting her affectionately, said:

"I felt sorry, my child, to have you leave the gentlemen for the remainder of their stay, for they were anxious to hear you sing."

"Father, you know that I will not listen to any friend abused, and especially one to whom I owe so much as to Noel Stanwood, and the commodore was making him out all that was wicked and terrible."

"The commodore has proof, he says, that will place Stanwood in a very bad light, and as he states, may hang him."

"The commodore is a silly old man, a terror to his crew, and blind with prejudice and what he deems his duty."

"Noel is an American, and that is enough to hang him in the commodore's eyes, and Sir Bradwyn Brule was his pet."

"But Noel should not have killed his superior officer."

"He had ample cause for his duel, sir."

"The commodore says not."

"As I said, father, the commodore knows nothing about the facts, and I do."

"You?"

"Yes, sir."

"Has Stanwood returned?" quickly asked Paul Revere.

"No, sir."

"How do you know aught about the affair, then?"

"From the second officer in rank on the commodore's frigate, British King."

"I wish you would explain, Pearl."

"Well, father, when I left you at dinner today, I did not go to my room, but to the Stanwoods."

"Mrs. Stanwood was away, having heard these fearful rumors about her son, and gone to see what that old fraud, Farley, could tell her of them."

"While I was there an officer called—Lieutenant Brainard Bonair, of the British King."

"He said that he had heard the rumors about Noel, and knowing the truth, as he knew Stanwood, and felt that his mother and sister would be greatly distressed, he took the liberty of calling to set matters aright."

"He had been the one to arrest Noel after the

duel, and more, he had witnessed the meeting, and heard from Lord Erskine Enders, the first officer of the brig, just how Noel had come on board."

"Ah, yes, Lord Erskine came over from England just the day before the brig sailed, and was ordered on board."

"He is one of the richest nobles in England, and counts his ancestry back for centuries."

"Then he should be worthy of belief, father, and I will tell you his story to Lieutenant Bo-nair, as well as the latter's statements, also."

Pearl then told what she knew of Noel's saving the brig, after his having been wounded and robbed in South America, and captured by pirates.

"She told also of Captain Crimson having sailed in the brig, and his plot to capture his old vessel, and that Noel Stanwood had saved her."

In referring to the treatment of Noel by Sir Bradwyn Brule, she said:

"He had a motive for this, in that he told me he could win my love but for the sailor American, and as he stole the miniature which I gave to Noel, and carried it off with him, it was because he reported on the quarter-deck, in the hearing of Stanwood, that I was engaged to him, and had kissed him farewell, that the lie was hurled in his teeth, and when attacking Noel with his sword, the weapon was torn from his grasp, broken and thrown into the sea, while he also received a blow upon his face."

"By the king, but Noel Stanwood saved me from killing that fellow," cried Prince George, springing to his feet and angrily pacing the floor of the library.

"He has punished Brule, so let it drop; but he was put in irons, but released when Captain Kane said that he could not hold him a prisoner, he never having shipped on the brig, and acting as boatswain as a favor to him."

"So Noel went ashore in Callao, where the frigate was at anchor, and Sir Bradwyn sent him a challenge."

"Lord Erskine was Noel's second, and all feared the worst, for you know that Sir Bradwyn Brule was a noted duelist."

"Yes, he was greatly feared, being a dead shot and superb swordsman."

"Well, father, Noel disarmed him, and gave him his sword and his life, but was shamefully insulted for doing so."

"The cur! I thought better of Brule than that."

"He demanded a second meeting with pistols, and Lord Erskine refused until Noel urged, and then Sir Bradwyn fell dead with a bullet in the center of his forehead, and Noel took my miniature from his dead body and left the spot, to be arrested some hours after by order of the commodore, and sent to the brig in irons, and be brought to Boston for trial, which you know, father, will end in his being hanged, as he is an American."

"Alas, I fear so, my child."

"Then, father, your duty is plain, and that is to save him."

"I can do nothing, I fear."

"When you are convinced that you cannot, sir, then tell me and I will act, but I prefer you to try first."

"You will act, Pearl?" asked the amazed father of the beautiful girl.

"Yes, sir, for I vow to you that Noel Stanwood shall never be murdered by the British when he has been guilty of no crime, and all his misfortunes have come upon him through defending my honor."

"By Heaven, Pearl, but you are right."

"They shall not hang him, if I can save him."

"You dear old papa, I knew you were too true a man to desert one who had saved your only child from a fearful fate," and with a far lighter heart Pearl bade her father good-night, and sought her room to dream of the noble young sailor she loved so devotedly.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PERUVIAN PIRATE.

THE British brig-of-war Shark sailed from Callao upon her mission, as ordered by the commodore of the frigate, and in irons in his state-room went Noel Stanwood.

Captain Kane found himself short-handed, with Sir Bradwyn Brule dead and another of his officers laid up from a wound received in the attack of the pirates, in which fight also a midshipman who had been wounded had afterward died.

"This deprived him of three officers, while his crew for duty hardly numbered over two-score men."

Still the frigate had been short-handed so that he could not draw upon her for either officers or men.

Commodore Tate had ordered Captain Kane to run in by night into the pirate harbor, without lights, drop anchor, lower his boats, and with muffled oars creep near the land to attack just at dawn should the buccaneers have returned to their haunt.

This the captain did, the brig running in

without a light visible, and the men were gotten into the boats ready for action with the dawn's coming.

But the outlaws had flown, the work of an attempted surprise was useless, and the brig, after filling her water-casks again, prepared for her cruise.

But suddenly, out of a lagoon which the boats had not gone up further than a few hundred rods, emerged a large *goleta*, her crew at the sweeps as they urged her on, and the sails being rapidly set as she moved out into the bay.

The brig, pirate-hunting though it was, had certainly been caught napping, and it was evident that the buccaneers wanted the brig for their cruising, and were determined to have her.

They had some old guns mounted upon the *goleta*, and her decks literally swarmed with men, outnumbering the Shark's crew four to one.

The men of the brig rushed to quarters, and for a few minutes all was excitement on board.

The brig could fly from her foe, but would a British captain dare run from a buccaneer, no matter what the odds?

Certainly Captain Kane had no such wish or intention, and as the *goleta* swept nearer, he managed to get a shot upon her, that cut through her crowded decks.

Then the combat was begun in hot earnest, the pirates and the king's men taking and giving severe punishment.

The nimble sailing of the brig, which held off, kept the pirates from boarding, as was their intention, and had they done so they could have swept the decks of the crew by their overwhelming numbers.

The brig seemed holding her own well, keeping off, and pushing the *goleta* terribly, and in this way, but for an unlucky shot, might have driven the buccaneers back into the lagoon.

But a shot from the rusty old thirty-two pounder, mounted upon the bows of the *goleta*, cut away the brig's bowsprit and at once she broached to.

A wild yell, demoniacal in its fierceness and joy, came from the buccaneers, and the *goleta* was headed down upon the brig to board.

A hot fire from the coming *goleta* also wounded Captain Kane in the leg, and Lieutenant Caldwell had already been carried below with a severe wound, while Lord Erskine, in command, was bleeding from a bullet in the shoulder, and the handkerchief tied around his head was red with blood, from a gash made by a splinter.

It certainly looked very black for the brig, and not an atom of hope was in the breast of an officer or man, but all made up their minds to die right there on the decks.

Suddenly a tall form bounded upon deck, followed by a marine, half a dozen sick men from below, and as many men who had been sent below as slightly wounded.

"Ahoy men, the *goleta* is coming down before the wind, so have every gun to windward, double-shot them, fire the relief pieces through the bulwarks and give her a double broadside as she rounds to to come alongside!"

A yell greeted the words and a loud voice cried:

"God bless you, Noel Stanwood! you will save the brig!"

It was Lord Erskine who uttered the words, and to a man every one sprung to obey the order.

The port guns were drawn in and shipped to starboard, between the ports, and all were double-shotted.

The men worked like demons, the muskets were double-shotted and while the *goleta* was yet three lengths away they were ready for her.

"All be ready the minute you fire to let the brig fall away before the wind, and while she is thus running a bowsprit can be rigged, Lord Erskine; but pardon me for giving orders, only I told my marine-guard to release me, and collecting the sick and slightly wounded took the liberty of coming to your aid."

"And I say again, God bless you, Stanwood."

"Yonder lies Captain Kane with a shattered leg, Caldwell is below severely wounded, I am wounded in three places, so say to you take command and I'll lend you my aid, though I can do but little."

"Ahoy, men! Captain Stanwood will command you and save the brig!"

The men gave a cheer, and Stanwood had not a moment to refuse, as he had intended, for the *goleta* was rounding up into the wind intending to come down, as he had supposed, to windward, round to and drift down upon the brig.

"Steady at your guns! Keep clear of the recoil of those not made fast."

"Muskets fire first, and broadside follow—all ready—fire!"

The voice of Stanwood was distinctly heard, and the muskets, every man having one, rattled forth fifty shots into the crowded mass of humanity only short pistol-range away.

The brig's men had fired deliberately, and the result was terrible havoc in the midst of the pirate horde.

"Broadside ready—fire!"

Every heavy gun upon the brig belched forth fire, smoke and iron,

The brig reeled far over under the shock, sending her loose guns down to port again, and but for the fact that they had some lashings, to the other gun-carriages, they would have burst through the bulwarks and gone into the sea.

Of course some men were hurt in the recoil, but, that was nothing, when it was seen that the entire starboard bulwark had been carried, in a mass of flying wood and splinters along with the iron hurricane, upon the *goleta*'s crowded decks.

The result was fearful, for many of the pirates were literally blown to pieces, two guns on their deck were dismounted, and the foremast cut away, while the death rate was appalling.

But Stanwood had no eyes for his enemy, but only looked to the safety of the brig.

He knew that he had not over thirty men for action, while if half of the buccaneers were killed they yet had a hundred.

So he let the brig fall quickly away before the wind, aiding her with the forward windward sweeps, and had a spar ready to set as a jury bowsprit, while she moved off.

The men imbibed his spirit and worked like beavers, more sail was spread, and the two stern guns meanwhile kept pouring in a hot fire upon the now almost wrecked *goleta*, which, however, still kept firing upon the brig in her flight.

The course of the brig lay toward the outlet of the bay, the wind being off-shore, and so it was supposed she was flying, and the pirates cheered, while the *goleta* must have been leaking badly, as she was headed, under what sail she could set, for the mouth of the lagoon.

Never before had the men of the brig worked as they did, and in a very short while, before she had gone a mile, there came a cry:

"All ready, sir!"

"Set your jib and stand by your posts, men, to wear ship."

"Ready at those bow guns?"

The orders of Stanwood were quickly obeyed, the brig swept around, and as she went away on the starboard tack, her bows pointed first toward the retreating *goleta*, his guns opened a hot fire.

Then all recognized the skill, coolness and splendid courage of the man who had ordered his irons knocked off to come to the rescue of the brig, and a wild yell went up from them en while Lord Erskine, seated in a chair brought him from the cabin, for he was too weak to stand, grasped Stanwood's hand and said:

"*You alone* can save the brig, my friend, and Captain Kane has seen all and recognizes it."

"I do indeed! if I am dismissed the service for it, I say you are no longer a prisoner upon this brig, Stanwood," said Captain Kane, his face full of physical anguish as he lay propped up against the companionway entrance, where he had been made as comfortable as possible by the men, for he would not leave the deck, and in his hand he held his faithful cutlass.

The *goleta* meanwhile seeing that the brig was not flying, but with a jury bowsprit had put about in pursuit, was using every endeavor to escape, while the steady, deliberate fire of the bow guns of the Shark, were telling upon vessel and crew.

"Stanwood, the loss of life upon that vessel is frightful," said Lord Erskine.

"It is, sir, but they are three to one against us, so I do not care for closer quarters, but only to drive her into her retreat, where the depth of water is not sufficient for the brig to follow."

"We must get out of the fight, sir, with full honors, you know," and Stanwood smiled at the conceit of driving the *goleta*, which he had no idea of attacking, into her retreat.

Captain Kane, in spite of his sufferings, laughed, and replied:

"Yes, we ran her into her retreat, where we could not follow—it's our victory, of course, but *you are the winner of it*, my young friend."

Stanwood raised his hat and remained silent, while, as the *goleta* now entered the lagoon, he ordered the brig put about, and running over near the entrance of the bay, anchored in quiet water, and where the brig would be safe from a boat attack.

Then he ordered the surgeon to report to Captain Kane and Lord Erskine in the cabin at once, the other wounded to be taken below, the carpenter to sound the well for a leak, and repair damages, while the dead were to be sewed up in hammocks, shotted, and cast into the sea.

In a couple of hours all was going on smoothly, the carpenter had reported no leak, and with his men were repairing the bulwarks, the crew were rigging a permanent bowsprit, and mending sails and rigging, and the wounded were being cared for below decks by men ordered to that duty.

Then Noel Stanwood stepped up to the senior middy on board, and said:

"You are the ranking officer, Midshipman Willis, so take command."

"And you, sir?"

"I am a prisoner, sir, on this brig, so return to my irons," was the response, and leaving the astonished middy gazing at him in dumb silence, Noel Stanwood walked below to his quarters, called a marine, and ordered him to replace his irons upon him, which had been taken off by his guard for him to lend a hand in the defense of the brig from the attack of the pirates.

CHAPTER XXXI.

NO FAVORS ASKED OR RECEIVED.

So quietly had Stanwood gone back to his irons, that no one on the ship, except the guard on duty, knew of it.

Those who saw Midshipman Burt Willis in command, supposed that he had simply relieved the merchant captain from duty, and they were aware that Captain Kane, Lord Erskine and Lieutenant Caspar Caldwell were below severely wounded, another junior lieutenant had been killed and six midshipmen were the only officers left for duty.

Certainly the brig had been unfortunate in quarter-deck laws, and equally so with the crew, for a dozen had gone to their last resting-place beneath the waves, and wounds unfitted as many more for duty.

The brig herself, except her torn bulwarks lost bowsprit, damaged sails and rigging, and a dismounted gun, had not been materially injured.

But he had no desire to face another ordeal, and was glad, as there was a smooth sea and fair wind, to depart from the bay.

The sound of buccaneers above mingled with the low moans of the wounded below, as she headed out into the Pacific, and just as the sun neared the western horizon of boundless waters, shaped her course down the coast.

The crew soon began to group themselves together on deck, and at last knocked off work altogether.

There was something of a mysterious nature going on, that was certain, and the midshipmen, filling the places of their senior officers, began to feel alarmed at they knew not what.

At last the men came aft, and one of them acting as spokesman after saluting politely, said:

"Mister Willis the men want me to talk for 'em, sir, and what I has ter say all of us mean."

"You'll hear us of course, sir, being as you is commandin' ther brig now?"

There was nothing for Midshipman Burt Willis, commanding his Majesty's brig-of-war Shark, to do but to hear what the crew had to say.

He was a clever fellow and had sound sense as well, so said:

"Of course I'll hear what you have to say, Coxswain Fenner."

"Well, sir, we is all common seamen, but we has feelings, and sense, same as other humans, and we has eyes and ears like other folks, sir."

"That we has used our faculties, sir, we'll prove by sayin' that a gentleman, once a rich man and aristocratic blooded in Boston, risked his life to swim out to this brig and warn us of danger."

"Luck had gone ag'in' him, but for all that he risked being torn to pieces by sharks to come to our aid."

"The Lord Luftenant, Sir Bradwyn, received him shameful; but the cap'n had a heart and horse sense, and he gave him a hearin' and the result was this brig and all on board of her were saved from Davy Jones's Locker."

"Now, sir, this gent were browbeat after that, by them as should have known better, and when he resented an insult, he was put in irons, then sent ashore."

"But he was followed there and challenged for a duel."

"We has heard all about that duel from our mates of the frigate who seen it, and yet he was hunted down, arrested and put in irons to be taken home and be hanged."

"To-day, sir, when all was ag'in' us, and we had made up our minds to die, this gentleman sailor in irons, ordered the guard to take 'em off, and with the sick and wounded who could walk, he came on deck and again saved the brig."

"Now, sir, we find the captain in his cabin wounded bad, Leftenant Lord Erskine also down with several wounds, as is also the third luff, and where Mr. Stanwood was in charge, he is now in irons, and you hold the command of the brig, and we just has this to say, sir, and we means it all, that if he is not set free within ten minutes, we'll not obey another order given us on board this king's craft."

Burt Willis saw that the men were in earn-

est, and he felt his inability to cope with them, so said:

"Men, I acknowledge that it looks unjust against Mr. Stanwood, but I will consult the captain and see what he has to say."

"Upon his decision I shall act, whether it be to yield to your demand, or to treat you as mutineers."

"Midshipman Dorsey, hold the deck, sir," and Burt Willis went below.

Captain Kane was much easier.

The bullet had been extracted from his leg by the surgeon, but the bone had been splintered, and the greatest care was necessary for him to pull through without an amputation.

"Ah, Mr. Willis, I am glad to see you, sir, and I suppose you have come to report that our good friend, Stanwood, has gotten the brig in ship-shape condition again?"

"I have come to report, Captain Kane, that Mr. Stanwood ordered me to take command, and that he returned to his state-room and had his irons put on him again."

"My God! why has he done this?"

"This must not be, sir."

"So the men say, sir, for they are now amidships and demand his release, and there is an ugly spirit among them about it."

"Egad, I do not blame them; but who ordered it that Stanwood be put again in irons?"

"I do not think such an order was given, for no one had the right so to do; but Stanwood is a strange man, and asks no favors, so he told Midshipman Dorsey, and considers that his duty is to stand his trial."

"Go to him at once and release him, and say to the men that Mr. Stanwood acted from his own will."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Mr. Willis, as you have reported to me, I will say that Captain Stanwood is to take command, with you as acting first lieutenant, and Midshipman Dorsey, second."

"We are terribly crippled, but I have every faith that the brig will be in good hands, even with no senior officers on board able to do duty."

"Thank you, sir," and the handsome young middy, a youth of eighteen, went on deck, passed the men in silence and descended to the quarters of Noel Stanwood.

He found that young gentleman serenely accepting the situation, and he was greeted politely with:

"I hope all goes well on deck, Commander Willis?"

On the contrary, sir, a mutiny is threatening from your conduct."

"How so, sir?"

"No orders were given, sir, for you to be again put in irons."

"Nor were any orders issued for me to be released; but, as I took the responsibility of freeing myself in an emergency, when that emergency was past, I took the liberty of returning to my imprisonment."

"Well, Mr. Stanwood, it is Captain Kane's order that you be set free and at once assume command of the brig, while I act as your first luff, and Dorsey as second."

"You are fully capable, sir, of commanding the brig, and I will accept no favor from king's officers, for I am a prisoner, held under most serious charges that endanger my life if proven; but, my trial I shall not avoid in any way."

"You refuse to accept your freedom?"

"Most emphatically I do, sir."

"May I ask why?"

"I have given my reasons, sir, but I will repeat them so that you will understand fully."

"Pray do so?"

"I am an American, and conscious of being guilty of no crime. I ask no favors of the king, or of his officers, though many of them I regard with feelings of sincere friendship."

"I was put in irons as a criminal, so let me remain in irons until a king's court-martial proves me innocent or hangs me at the yard-arm."

"A not unlikely occurrence, sir."

"The hanging, oh no; but, I understand, Mr. Willis, the feeling of regular officers and British subjects against that of the merchant service and Americans; but, you are young, and I can excuse one of your age for his sarcasm toward a man in irons."

Burt Willis was not a bad fellow, but with most of the officers of the brig he had not the manliness to like one of the merchant marine, and an American, whose deeds had put to the blush the king's best men.

But at Stanwood's cutting words instead of showing anger, he said quickly:

"I beg pardon, for I meant not to offend, sir."

Stanwood smiled pleasantly and said:

"It is forgotten, Mr. Willis; but, pray go on deck, and feel assured that I have no desire to take from you the honor of commanding the brig, while, under your command I shall feel perfectly safe, though in irons."

"But this mutiny," asked the flattered middy.

"Ah! a mutiny?"

"Yes, sir, I thought I had reported that the men, to a man, refuse to move hand until you are set free."

"It is kind of them, and I appreciate it; but they are wrong, and must go to their duties."

"But they refuse."

"Send the leaders to me, or have them come with you, and I will explain to them that it is my own wish to remain in irons, refusing to accept any concession whatever."

The middy bowed and departed, but soon returned with the spokesman and several of the crew.

"My brave fellows and good friends, I wish to say to you that I returned to my irons of my own accord, and it is against the wishes of your officers, while I am asked to take command of the brig."

"But I do not admit that I have committed any crime, so will not ask or receive a concession from the king's officers, so prefer to remain as I am, a prisoner in irons."

"Now return to the deck and obey your gallant young commander in all things, while should you need me in another combat, Commander Willis, I will gladly lend you the might of my arm."

The men saw that the prisoner had his own good reasons for not accepting his liberty, and returned to the deck made known the result to their comrades, and went to their posts of duty without a word, while Burt Willis and his young fellow-officers gave a sigh of deep relief.

But both Captain Kane and Lord Erskine received the decision of Stanwood with the deepest regret.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HURRICANE.

THERE was one thing that Stanwood had noticed in the attack of the pirate *goleta* upon the brig, and that was the commander of the fierce band.

He had recognized upon the deck of the *goleta* the well-known form and face of Captain Crimson, and pointed him out to Lord Erskine Enders, with the remark:

"This is the third battle that Captain Crimson and I have fought each other."

This showed that Captain Crimson had still power among the Peruvian pirates, and all that he needed was to get a good vessel once more to prove as dangerous a foe as before upon the seas.

He also had proven himself a very dangerous man to cope with.

Having been captured by Stanwood, as has been seen, he had escaped from prison in Boston, on the eve of the day appointed for his being hanged, and shaving off his beard and cutting off his hair, he had boldly gone on board the brig, his old vessel, and shipped as a common seaman.

But he had made his escape cleverly, when the brig had been off the bay into which she was to run for water, and had reached the shore and joined his old comrades, while those on the *Shark* believed him to have fallen overboard and been lost.

He did not see Stanwood, though the latter saw him, and, though ill, learning of his plot to capture the brig, made his escape though ill, and saved the vessel as has been seen.

In the battle Captain Crimson recognized his old foe, as did Stanwood know him, and the same mutual recognition took place when the brig had been so nearly caught in a trap by the *goleta*.

"If I had a vessel of my own, I would like to run that man off the seas," Stanwood had remarked one day to his guard, who was discussing Captain Crimson, having also recognized him, as many had, in the leader of the pirates, and as their shipmate out from Boston.

Under command of midshipman Willis the brig went on her way, steady and brisk breezes that were favorable to her course down the Pacific Coast aiding her until she was off the Straits of Magellan.

She was in good trim once more, her bulwarks and rigging repaired, shot marks removed, and half a dozen of her sick and slightly wounded men had recovered sufficiently to report for duty.

Captain Kane was recovering slowly, for his wound was one that would take long to heal, and fever set in with Lieutenant Caldwell and he was having a hard time of it.

In the case of Lord Erskine Enders, his wounds, for he had three of them, were more serious than at first believed, and so Midshipman Willis was congratulating himself upon being so fortunate as to remain in command during the whole voyage, and he was offering up daily prayers for good weather to attend him.

As for the prisoner, he took his captivity serenely, and received the best food the brig afforded, while the men often dropped in for a chat with him to show their sympathy and secretly report how matters were going on, for they had not unbounded confidence in the youthful officer in command.

"As long as the wind blows fair, sir, and the sea don't get real angry, the acting lieutenant is all right, and knows what he's about; but if a tornado should happen to sweep down upon us, or the weather gets good and nasty a-roundin' the Horn, then my simple idee as a foremost hand be that the young luff will feel like a youthful parson a-preachin' his fu'st sermon."

Such was the opinion of the new boatswain, Jack Gilpin, and it is needless to say that this was the idea in the heads of every man of the crew.

"He's all right for fair weather; but when it begins to get ugly then—"

The ominous shake of their heads completed the sentence more thoroughly than words.

Whether it was that Midshipman Burt Willis did not pray in the proper spirit, or not, I cannot say; but when the brig was off the Straits of Magellan, and laying her course to round Cape Horn, the weather came up black and threatening.

The sea kept pace with the wind, and the brig, with shortened sail, went plowing along in a rough sea, and heeling well over under the pressure of half a gale.

So the day passed, and as night came on Midshipman Willis began to look very anxious, while the reflection from his face, upon the faces of the junior middies, became almost despair.

The men looked gloomy also, and a dead silence settled upon the brig when the night settled down with intense darkness, and the wind began to howl more dismally through the rigging.

The off-watch showed their anxiety by remaining upon deck, and from below came groans of pain from the wounded, as the pitching of the vessel caused them to suffer intensely, and that it would carry off some of the worst ones among the sufferers all knew.

Captain Kane was anxious, and had asked Midshipman Willis to report often to him the situation and Lieutenant Caldwell, ravaging in the delirium of fever, would shriek out that the ship was sinking until the men shuddered and tried to shut out from their ears his ominous wailings.

Lord Erskine was calm, but his wounded shoulder was showing signs of giving him much trouble, and the surgeon had advised that he be landed at some port where every attention could be shown him, as otherwise his life might be the forfeit.

In his quarters Noel Stanwood was the serenest man aboard ship, and took the situation without a murmur, telling the guard that Commander Willis would handle the ship well, though he hoped they would not run into any worse weather than they then had.

Toward midnight the wind was blowing a

gale, the sea was running in fearful waves, and it looked very much as though the end was not yet, for Cape Horn, always to be dreaded, seemed to have gotten up a carnival of tempest just to test the nerve of the youngster officers of the brig.

At last the brig began to pitch and lurch so terribly that Burt Willis felt as though he wished to shift the responsibility of command upon broader shoulders than his own, so sent word to Captain Kane that there was a hurricane threatening, and the ship was already laboring so terribly that she seemed about to pitch her masts out of her, while three men had been swept from the deck.

From below came the surgeon to report that two of the wounded men had died from the laboring of the ship, and if Lord Erskine was thrown from the position he was in, that his death would quickly follow.

The captain also was suffering by the movement of his wounded leg, and it was after an exceedingly severe twinge that Midshipman Dorsey appeared.

"Go in to Captain Noel Stanwood, a king's prisoner in irons on board of this vessel, and ask him, with my compliments and appeal, that he allow his irons to be taken off and go on deck and assume full command of his Majesty's brig-of-war Shark, now in danger of being lost, for upon him depends the safety of the ship and the lives of all on board.

"Lose no time, sir, and report his answer; but tell Midshipman Willis the duty I send you upon."

Midshipman Dorsey almost uttered a cry of delight, as he darted up the companion-way to deliver the message sent to the prisoner.

"What does he say?" gasped Burt Willis, who just at that minute was clinging to the windward bulwarks and anathematizing himself that he had ever been such a fool as to enter the Royal Navy.

Midshipman Dorsey repeated the words of Captain Kane, with a few additions of his own, and Burt Willis at once said:

"I will myself make the request, so hold the deck, Dorsey."

"What if she goes under while I am in charge?" cried Dorsey, not relishing the responsibility.

"Then you may congratulate yourself at least that you'll never be court-martialed," was the cynical response of the midshipman commander as he hastened below, to humble himself before the hated American, hated in spite of his having saved the lives of all on board the brig, hated because he was not a king's officer and yet was a hero.

But it was no time then to hesitate, and he went with a rush into the quarters of the prisoner in irons.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN COMMAND.

A LURCH of the brig shot Midshipman Burt Willis into the state-room of Noel Stanwood, as though he had been fired from a catapult.

The middy had run as far as the door, but there halted a second to make a dignified entrance, which however was not vouchsafed him.

He was coolly caught by the manacled arm of the prisoner, who was serenely smoking a cigar, and said with an air of perfect calmness:

"Commander Willis, this visit is an honor; be seated, please."

This fairly took the breath of the middy away, and he could not utter a word.

"The perfect coolness of the man in irons calmed him, and he said:

"I beg pardon for my hasty entrance, Captain Stanwood, but it is my wish that you relieve me of the command of the brig, as I have not the experience I could wish, and Captain Kane particularly sends the same request, with his compliments."

"The ship is in danger, sir, I have felt, and as you make the request, being in command, and Captain Kane desires it, I will accede to your combined wishes in the matter and do all in my power to help the good brig out of her trouble."

"And I will stand by you, sir, through all, and thank you for taking a weight off of my shoulders too heavy for them to bear."

"Ho, guard! bring the keys of these irons here."

The keys were soon brought and the pris-

oner and the midshipman went on deck together, when, as the crew beheld Stanwood, a cheer that ended in a yell of joy, went up into the teeth of the hurricane to show their delight in having their hero in command of the tempest-tossed brig.

If Noel Stanwood was cramped by his long confinement he did not show it, but when he reached the deck he drew in a long breath of air, as though enjoying the gale.

Neither did he show any anxiety about the vessel, for he was watched closely by every one to see what he thought.

"About where are we, Mr. Willis?" he asked, pleasantly.

"A trifle southwest of the Horn, sir."

"And how far off-shore?"

"Twenty leagues perhaps, sir."

Then Stanwood stepped to the binnacle light and took a look at the compass, after which he noticed that there were but two men at the wheel.

"Send another quartermaster here, Mr. Willis, please."

His next glance was at the sails.

"We are crowding her a little hard, I fear," and he ordered all sails aloft taken in.

Then he took another glance at the compass and said:

"Keep her off a couple of points—steady as you are!"

Turning again to the midshipman he asked:

"Are the guns firmly lashed, Mr. Willis?"

"With single lashings, sir."

"They must be doubled, for to me there is every indication that we will have it blowing great guns before long, and I only hope we can get well around the Horn first, so that we can drive before it."

While the guns were being more firmly lashed, some men were set to batten down the hatches, and next it was decided to house topmasts in spite of the blow.

"Hold the deck, Mr. Willis, while I go aloft."

"Come, men, follow me up aloft to house topmasts."

The crew sprung to obey to a man, while several cried out:

"Not you, captain, we'll do it, sir; not you!"

But Stanwood would not ask the men to do what he would not dare in that blow, and they soon saw that he was as good as a seaman as he was in the capacity of commander.

The topmasts were housed, in spite of the reeling, surging, plunging vessel, and the men were again at their posts on deck.

"Here she comes, lads, and we'll run with her."

"At the wheel there!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Let her come round as the hurricane overtakes us, until she is dead before it—then hold her so, but all hands look out for the rush of waters."

The crew were no longer dispirited, for they recognized a master mind and hand to guide them.

They knew their danger to a man, but they felt that if the brig could be saved the one who then guided her destinies would do so.

The midshipmen were silent, attentive and watchful, and if they were glad that Burt Willis was no longer in command, that young gentleman was shaking hands with himself over and over again in congratulations of that very fact.

That Stanwood had gone aloft to house topmasts convinced him that he realized the full danger and that the brig must behave her very best to weather the storm.

Below decks the men were more nervous, for they could only hear and feel, but they had been glad to know that Noel Stanwood was now in charge of the brig.

As for Captain Kane he was silent, but took in all that his experience of long years enabled him to do from the orders given and the *feel* of the ship, and Lord Erskine remarked to the surgeon that he no longer feared the result.

The surgeon had given Caldwell some quieting medicine, looked after the others who needed his services, and then sought the side of Lord Erskine, in whom he had perfect confidence, and there near the young officer had also gathered several of the more

slightly wounded, waiting for the climax, whatever it might be.

"There she comes, lads! hold hard all! Steady at the helm, but meet every movement of your ship, men!"

There was not an atom of excitement in the voice and the clear tones reached every ear above the roaring waters and howling winds, and they were heard below decks too.

There indeed did "she come"—the hurricane—in all its ghoulish glee of viciousness and conscious power.

A wall of white foam as high as the mizzen peak, and black clouds almost sweeping the waters and driven along with furious speed.

One vivid glare of lightning came, only one, as though to reveal to the sailors the mouth of the ocean and winds, and then the foaming wall came down upon the devoted ship.

The decks were swept from stern to forecastle, and shrieks of despairing men dragged from their clutch for life mingled with the hissing winds and seething waters.

But Stanwood had himself sprung to the wheel, and with a swaying, twisting motion the brig came upward instead of being crushed out of sight, and feeling the fierce winds in the small canvas set, bounded away like a huge thing of life in terrible fright.

So on she flew, straight as an arrow, at a tremendous speed, yet holding her own and showing that she was not conquered, not to be drowned in the mad ocean, frail as she appeared amid that appalling battle of the elements.

For full an hour no word was spoken upon the decks, other than a low command from Stanwood, who had taken one side of the wheel, with a giant-formed quartermaster at the other.

Then his experience told him that the danger was past, the hurricane was dying out, and the wave-tops were no longer white walls of foam.

"We are driving along tremendously, Mr. Willis, but the danger has gone by," he said, quietly, as the midshipman made his way to his side.

"And but for you the brig would have been now at the bottom of the sea."

"Oh, no, perhaps not, for she is a hard one to drown, as she has just shown, for she behaved nobly."

"The tempest is over at least."

"Oh, yes, we'll soon have it down to half a gale and then the sea will soon run down, and you can relieve me."

"Of the watch, yes, for you need rest, but not of the command, for I will not take the brig again, not I, Captain Stanwood, so you'll have to act."

"Perhaps Mr. Dorsey may be willing to?"

"I'll be curse—I beg pardon, Captain Stanwood; but I meant to say that Mr. Dorsey is not so anxious for promotion as he was, so you'll have to be captain with a lot of scared middies for luffs, for there's not a mother's son of us but was saying over every prayer we had ever learned in infancy," and Midshipman Dorsey added, as Stanwood laughed lightly at his words:

"To-morrow not one of us will have been frightened; but to-night we are as scared a lot as ever trod a ship's deck—eh, Willis?"

"Well, I was anxious about the brig."

"Certainly, for if she held on, you would be all right."

"I confess, however, that I felt easy after Captain Stanwood took command."

"I regret that we lost some of our poor fellows."

"Muster the men, Mr. Willis, please, and see how many were swept away when the hurricane boarded us."

The men were numbered, for the wind had now sunk rapidly down to a stiff breeze, and the sea was as rapidly becoming smooth.

"Four went off, sir, on the wave, and two men were hurt, and were carried below," reported Burt Willis.

"Poor fellows; but they met a sailor's fate."

"Have the carpenter sound the well, please."

This was done, and the report was that the brig was not leaking, and a cheer came as the men heard it.

"How many men for duty, all told, Mr. Willis?"

The count was made, and the report was

five midshipmen, one surgeon and an assistant, the boatswain, sailmaker, carpenter, and twenty-eight able-bodied seamen.

"Do you know what course Captain Kane desires to steer?"

"He just asked to see you, sir, so he will tell you."

"Take the deck, please, and keep her as she now heads until the sea is quieter, when we can head her north-by-east, for we have rounded Cape Horn, I am sure."

So saying, Noel Stanwood descended to the cabin.

Captain Kane held forth his hand and grasped that of Stanwood, while he said in a voice that quivered with feeling:

"My dear young friend, for the third time you have saved this brig from loss, and all on board from death."

"Here, help yourself to some brandy, and then sit down and talk to me, for you are to hold command until we reach home."

"But, captain, I—"

"Not a word, sir, for I mean what I say."

"We are to run for Montevideo, where I expect to find the British sloop-of-war Pelican, and as she goes direct to Boston, I will send Lord Erskine on her, for he needs rest, and the best of skill and care."

"Then I have orders from Commodore Tate to touch at Trinidad, and also Jamaica and the Carolinas, when I shall head for Boston, and you are to hold command."

"Of course we must run from any foe, for in our weakened condition we cannot fight."

"Now you know just what the brig is to do, and what I expect of you."

"I can let you have a uniform to wear, and you will bunk in the cabin here."

"No, thank you, sir, I will retain my sailor garb, and keep my own quarters, for I am very comfortable there, and, as you desire it, I will hold command until you, or some of the officers are able to take the deck."

"As I said, Stanwood, we will send Lord Erskine directly home, so that Caldwell will be the only other to take charge, and even should he recover, you are to command, for my leg will keep me in the cabin for many weeks yet."

"You'll not refuse me this, when you see how helpless I am, and how all upon the brig depend upon you?"

"No, Captain Kane, as I feel that I can serve you, I will take command; but when we drop anchor in Boston Harbor I shall regard myself as a king's prisoner again."

"Of course, if you deem it best; but my word for it that you will be set free after all you have done for us."

"If you were the admiral, yes, sir; but I'll face my fate be it what it may."

And so it was that Noel Stanwood became the commander of a king's vessel-of-war.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PELICAN REACHES PORT.

BOSTON was in a state of siege, for General Howe, with his forces, had been driven into the works surrounding the city, and hemmed in there except from the sea, where the British vessels-of-war could run in and out.

One morning, a sloop-of-war came into port, and her arrival was greeted with delight by the besieged garrison.

She was just back from a long cruise in Southern seas, and though rumors had reached her of the Colonists resisting the king, there was no idea that there really could be a war, that the Americans would dare to really fight their British masters.

But the situation of affairs at Boston showed the returned mariners, that the Americans were determined to fight for their freedom from royal rule unto the bitter end.

The Pelican had made a slow run of it from the South American Coast, and upon her deck, seated in an easy-chair as she sailed into port, was an officer wearing the uniform of a lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

His face was pale as from long suffering, and he did not appear to be very strong.

It was Lord Erskine Enders, who had joined the sloop to come home in her.

The Pelican's captain had died of fever some weeks before, so that the wounded officer was given his large and comfortable quarters.

Then upon the sloop was a noted surgeon,

who at once took the responsibility of performing the operation necessary for the recovery of Lord Erskine, and its success was a pronounced one, for the wounded man began to improve from that very day.

He recuperated rapidly, and when Cuba was left astern was able to sit upon deck, while all the officers vied with each other in attentions to him, for Lord Erskine Enders was a very popular man.

When the Pelican reached port he was able to go at once to the tavern, where his well-known wealth gained for him the best accommodations.

His friends flocked in to see him, and he of course heard the rumors regarding the arrest of Sir Bradwyn Brule, and that that officer had been killed by the "mutineer" Noel Stanwood, once an honored young captain in the merchant service, and the descendant of a prominent and fine old family.

Lieutenant Bonair had given his version of the affair a number of times, but somehow it was overlooked, for Commodore Tate had nothing to say in favor of the young American, and the other officers of the frigate seemed to regard Stanwood as guilty.

Lieutenant Bonair was one of the first to call upon Lord Erskine, and he learned the occurrences on the brig after the departure of the vessel from Callao, and that Stanwood was then in command.

"It is just like the man, my lord, to go back into irons after his great service, for feeling that he has done no wrong, he is desirous to have it so proven before a court-martial, and his name thus cleared of all dishonor."

"Yes, but it seems strange that there is so much bitterness toward him here."

"I can understand it, I think, and I will give you my solution of the reason."

"Miss Pearl Revere, the daughter of the rich American here whose elegant style of living and appearance gained for him the name of Prince Paul Revere, is a catch that hundreds are after, from our highest ranking officers of navy and army down to poor luffs and civilians."

"The homes of the Reveres and Stanwoods joined until at Captain Stanwood's death it was found that his fortune was swept away, I verily believe stolen by his partner, Frank Farley."

"But Noel Stanwood, our hero, saved the life of Miss Revere, and when both were mere children, and they have loved each other ever since, and in my humble opinion are engaged."

"It was her miniature which Sir Bradwyn had that day, and I now know that he did not gain it by honorable means."

"Those who love Miss Revere for her own sake, and for her money, look upon Stanwood as the stumbling-block to their hopes, so wish to curse him in her eyes."

"Then Stanwood has a mother and sister, and the latter is a most beautiful girl, hardly less so than Miss Revere, and I own up frankly had I not left a lady-love in old England, I would fall desperately in love with Ethel Stanwood, while her mother is a most charming lady, aristocratic in bearing, and a noble woman she has been, from all accounts, through her whole life."

"Now, the partner of the elder Stanwood, Frank Farley by name, was an old beau of Mrs. Stanwood when she was Ethel Noel, but was refused."

"He is about her age, and Captain Stanwood took him into partnership with him, and the firm was considered a very rich one until the senior partner died, when the junior, Farley, had all the money, and said that the captain had ruined himself by bad speculations."

"He offered the Stanwoods a house, which was refused, and leaving him to take possession of their fine old homestead, they bought with their little means a snug cottage where mother and daughter now live."

"The capture of the pirate schooner, as she then was, of Captain Crimson, by Stanwood, gained for him a few thousands in prize money, and then he went to sea to take the barque out to South America, as you know, and from there his troubles began."

"And the reason of his leaving home, for there is some mystery about it?" asked Lord Erskine.

"I'll tell you about that."

"This man, Farley, failing to win Mrs.

Stanwood as a girl, determined to get the daughter, and he persecuted Miss Ethel continually.

"He told her that her mother was pining away in the cottage, and if she became his wife, her mother would go with them to the grand old home again.

"Also that her brother should have a fine vessel and all would be well.

"The poor girl very nearly sacrificed herself for the good of her mother and brother, when fortunately Noel returned from his cruise and the affair ended just there.

"Farley called when Miss Revere happened to be there, the two girls being in a wood near, and, maddened at the refusal of Ethel to marry him he attempted to kiss her.

"Noel had just come up from Long Wharf, where he had just engaged to go out with the barque to South America, and to sail at once.

"He saw Farley's act, as did Miss Revere, and springing forward he hurled the brute to the ground, and his head striking a rock, he lay like one dead.

"Noel felt his pulse and believed that he was dead, and in their turn the two girls urged him to fly.

"They would listen to no refusal, he must go, and Miss Revere would report the affair.

"Foolishly, but what won't a man do when a woman urges it, Noel went at once on board the barque and set sail, and then the ladies discovered that Frank Farley was only stunned.

"Miss Revere told him that if he made report of the affair, she would tell the truth, and it would look very bad for Merchant Frank Farley, so the matter was to be kept as a secret.

"But, Farley, I am sure, set the rumor going that Noel had tried to assassinate him, and had only been kept from so doing by his, Farley's, courage.

"This got out and hurt Stanwood, and upon top of it the frigate returned with her story, and that made it far worse for the poor fellow.

Now Farley had persistently haunted Miss Stanwood, and claims that he alone can save her brother from being hanged, and the price of his doing so is her hand."

"The villain!"

"Yes, and more, he is at the bottom of all these false rumors against Stanwood, so that where I, one, said the duel at Callao was a fair one, and Noel acted nobly, against it upon a hundred tongues is that report that it was a mutiny and a murder of Bradwyn by the American.

"I have traced these reports to Frank Farley.

"Not that he tells them, for he is too shrewd for that; but he gives to his toadies the cue and they spread the evil gossip.

"Now, I believe, I have told you all, Enders, for I mentioned my visit first to the Stanwoods."

"And I thank you exceedingly, Bonair, and I know that you will, with me, befriend Stanwood."

"Gladly I will."

"Now I already feel much improved, and in two or three days will be able to drive up to the Stanwood cottage, which I will do and tell them the truth.

"Then I shall call upon Mr. Frank Farley and tell him frankly that I will protect the good name of Noel Stanwood until his return, when he shall know the fountain head of all the baseless and wicked stories about him."

"Good! and I'll go with you; but what about Stanwood's trial?"

"Do you not think that Stanwood has earned the right to be released?"

"Indeed, I do; but old Yard Arm is terribly set in his ways, and he has determined that Stanwood shall be hanged 'for an example to the American rebels in the king's service,' he asserts."

"Well, I am equally as determined that he shall not hang, but live as an example of a splendid man for both British subjects and Americans to copy after."

"Good! and my idea is that you will win, Erskine, for I have great confidence in your powers."

"You must help me and we will, Bonair," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXXV.

LORD ERSKINE HAS SOMETHING TO SAY.

THERE had not a vessel come into port of late, but had had something to report about that mystery of the sea, the Silver Ship.

As before, vessels constantly crossed her course, and when the crew could be made to do so, some of the fleetest craft went in chase of her.

But chasing the Silver Ship was like chasing the power she was named after, the Wind.

Her name too, Wind Witch, seemed appropriate indeed, and smacked of the supernatural, men thought.

Superstitious seamen began to attribute to the Wind Witch untold powers of a weird kind.

It was said that the vessel which dared to spread sail in chase of the supposed specter of the ocean, would be sure to meet with some misfortune.

So it was that the strange mystery of the sea yet remained as great a mystery as before.

She sailed the seas hither and thither, now off the coast of Maine, now in the West Indies, and again in the Caribbean Sea.

She was seen out in the ocean two hundred leagues away, and she had sailed calmly around the Bermuda Islands in the plain light of day.

Again she had been seen off Jamaica, Key West and Havana.

Still no one had ever heard a hail from her decks, or an answer to a hail.

She had received the broadside of a hundred-gun line-of-battle ship at close quarters at night, and was not, apparently, harmed by the iron hail.

Chased by a cruiser she slipped away without seeming effort, and old seamen asserted that no craft built by human hands could sail as did the Silver Ship Wind Witch.

Of course the Silver Ship became the talk of the town, and the king had sent over orders to put the fleetest vessels in American waters upon the track, and run her down.

The Americans also were anxious to capture her, for it was now reported that she had untold riches on board, and the Colonists were by no means averse to gaining a financial lift, for war, they were finding, was a very expensive luxury.

The Silver Ship, with her millions, would swell the treasury of the country in a most desirable manner.

And so vessels were fitted out to go in chase of the Silver Ship, for to gain so much booty men were willing to risk even fighting an alleged specter craft.

Thus American cruisers and privateers, and also British vessels were on the alert to capture the noted Silver Ship.

The king's orders to catch the Wind Witch at any cost, had caused Lord Howe to look about for a suitable vessel, and it was decided, after a general canvass of the different craft, that the pirate schooner, which had been captured by Noel Stanwood, and purchased by the Government, and had been altered into a brig, was the fleetest craft in American waters.

The brig, too, was capable of carrying more canvas than she did, and she was as stanch in ugly weather as a frigate.

Built to hide in the lagoons and bayous, she did not draw so much water as the usual cruiser of her size, while her breadth of beam aided her in carrying her canvas.

From the report of the commander of the sloop-of-war Pelican, the Shark must put in an appearance at a very early day, and so every arrangement was made to at once put her in the dock, resharpen and refit her, and do all to add to her speed, while her battery was to be changed for a newer style of guns that were of a superior kind.

Her crew were to be of picked men, men who were perfect seamen and shipped knowing that the brig was to go in chase of a craft that was generally believed to be a specter of the sea, and certainly was a most mysterious one.

So all was expectancy, awaiting the arrival of the brig, whose fearful ordeal in the Pacific had now become known through the report of Lord Erskine.

That Noel Stanwood had been freed from his irons to take command, and save the ship, was also known; but the knowing ones

asserted that this would not excuse the act of Stanwood in killing his superior officer, and that he would be tried for the offense, and doubtless would be hanged upon his return, unless Lord Howe allowed his saving the brig to palliate his crime, and imprisoned him until a pardon could be procured from the king.

A few days after the arrival of Lord Erskine, he was well able to drive out, and with Bonair made a call at the cottage of Mrs. Stanwood.

Mrs. Stanwood was away, so old Lucy said, but Missy Ethel, with Miss Pearl Revere, who was spending the day with her, were over among the cedars with sketch scrapbooks.

Leaving the carriage at the cottage the two officers, dressed in their most gorgeous uniforms, walked over to the cedars and their eyes fell upon a pretty picture.

Seated in a nook, were the two girls, Ethel embroidering some fancy-work and Pearl reading aloud to her.

Their sun-hats and pretty dresses were showy and very attractive, and they certainly looked very beautiful, and had they prepared for the coming of the officers, to make an impression, their graceful attitudes and loveliness could not have made a more exquisite picture to win the heart of man.

It was a balmy afternoon, late in October, and the wind came off the sea crisp but not cool, and there they had been seated for an hour, reading, then talking of their book, and again discussing the war, the coming of the brig, Shark, and the dread of trouble for Noel Stanwood.

The step of the officers startled them, and they sprung to their feet as they beheld Lieutenant Brainard Bonair and a stranger.

The latter was a tall, elegantly-formed man of thirty, with a face that was exceedingly refined and bearing the stamp of a noble nature upon every feature.

His face was wan and pale now, like that of one who had been for a long time ill, or a sufferer.

Recognizing Lieutenant Bonair, they greeted him pleasantly, and bowed low as his friend, Lord Erskine Enders, was presented.

"Lord Erskine, let me tell you how glad I am to meet you, after all your kindness to my brother, for Lieutenant Bonair has told us all," and Ethel offered her hand in her sweet, naive way.

"My dear Miss Stanwood, I cannot understand what Bonair has been telling you, for I assure you I am guilty of having done nothing in particular deserving of thanks, as on three separate occasions has he saved the vessel upon which I was an officer, and the lives of all on board.

"It was to tell you of my having parted with him some weeks ago, that I came; but I must be particular not to let Bonair herald me with undeserved praise."

His manner was easy and frank, and his well-modulated voice was most pleasant to listen to, and Ethel said with a smile:

"With you as a witness against Lieutenant Bonair I shall not hold him guilty; but I, also, with my mother, owe much to his goodness, I assure you."

"Ah! my time now, it seems; but Miss Ethel, I brought Lord Erskine with me, knowing that he could tell you later news of your brother.

"He is just recovering from three severe wounds, received in the battle of the brig with pirates, and has been unable to come before, for he promised Captain Stanwood to call upon you."

"Yes, I did promise Captain Stanwood, to come to see your mother and yourself, Miss Stanwood, and I have so much to tell you of your gallant brother, to whom I am most sincerely attached."

Ethel at once led the way to the cottage, and Mrs. Stanwood having arrived, Lord Erskine was presented to her, after which he gave the whole history of Noel Stanwood, as heard from his lips, after leaving upon the barque, and after that his swimming out to the brig to warn her of danger of attack from the pirates.

The duel with Sir Bradwyn, and what led to it, he recounted, and he was a fine talker, and was listened to with the deepest attention by all.

"In his act aboard the brig against Brule, he was driven to it, losing his temper when

he saw the lieutenant's purpose and heard his words.

"I hope that the powers that be will regard him as not an enlisted man, and so condone his act, as should be done certainly after his noble services rendered."

"His duel was forced upon him, and Brule, confident in his own wonderful powers, had no dread of the result, and meant to kill Captain Stanwood, as both Lieutenant Bonair and myself saw, and we will so testify."

"What happened afterward I have told you, and as Captain Stanwood was freed from his irons to bring the brig into port, I sincerely hope that his offense, if such it was, will be disregarded, and I assure you I will do all in my power to have it so; but these old officers are hard to move."

"Should they decide against your son, Madam Stanwood, let me at least give you the hope that, *under no circumstances shall he suffer the sentence imposed upon him.*

"This I will pledge you."

There was something so significant in the words of Lord Erskine, that all of his hearers felt most hopeful, and Bonair knew that his friend had decided upon some plan of action, which, as he was not a rich man and might get into trouble, he would not make known to him.

"I had the pleasure, Miss Revere, of a visit from your father, so shall take an opportunity soon of calling at your house."

"I also had a visit from a Mr. Frank Farley, and I shall return it, too," and again there was a hidden meaning in his words, which caused all the ladies to feel that Merchant Farley had not impressed the nobleman very favorably.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DEFENDING A FRIEND.

THERE was no doubt but that Merchant Frank Farley held a good deal of influence in Boston, and especially with the British.

He had made many valuable acquaintances when the business partner of Captain Stanwood the senior, and somehow all he had put his hand to had turned to gold.

He lived in magnificent style in the home-stead that had been the Stanwoods' for generations, gave bachelor dinners and suppers, and entertained the very best people.

To get their legs under Frank Farley's mahogany, and enjoy one of his dinners, was something to be devoutly sought after.

He appeared to be a very generous man, for often his charities were heard of, and it was believed that but for his kind generosity to the Stanwoods they would have been paupers.

There was a club in Boston of the aristocratic Americans and the English officers, to which only a man of riches could belong.

Frank Farley was a member in the best of standing, and so was Lord Erskine Enders.

It was at this club, at one of its good suppers, one night, that a score of *bon vivants* had assembled.

There were dignitaries there in civil life, among them Frank Farley and Prince Paul Revere.

Then there were some officers of rank in both the army and navy of Great Britain, and all were enjoying the evening, when the conversation turned upon the still delayed brig-of-war Shark, which was so anxiously looked for, that she might at once be fitted out and sent in search of the weird Silver Ship.

"It would be useless to send any other craft, for not one could get nearer than that mysterious vessel," said the captain of a cruiser who had more than once chased the Silver Ship.

"And it is not certain that she can catch her," another added.

"No, but she is the fleetest vessel in the king's navy, and I do not believe there is one even among the swift flyers of the rebels that can sail with her."

"By the way, what do you think of these remarkable reports brought by the first officer of the brig, a young Lord Erskine Enders, I believe?"

It was Frank Farley who asked the question, and as Lord Erskine had been out when he had called upon him, he did not know the officer by sight, though he was at the supper, with Lieutenant Bonair, as his guest, the

two being seated at the further end of the table upon the same side that the merchant was.

"Why how do you mean, Mr. Farley?" asked an officer of the army.

"Simply that to my thinking he makes such a hero of that unfortunate young fellow Stanwood, who seems to have gone so utterly to the bad that it looks like a bid to save his neck."

All looked surprised, and the glances down the table caused the merchant to think he had made a mistake.

Then Lord Erskine arose and approaching the merchant said politely:

"Pardon me, but I have not the honor of your acquaintance—may I ask your name?"

"Farley, sir, Frank Farley," was the pompous reply.

"Ah! permit me to present myself, sir—I am Lord Erskine Enders."

"Ah indeed, oh yes; I am most happy, my lord, to meet you, and I left my card at your hotel."

"I received it, sir, but as we had never met I wished you to know that the first lieutenant of the brig-of-war Shark was present, and that I brought home the reports of the magnificent courage of that American hero, Captain Noel Stanwood, not as a bid in his favor, but in justice to one whom I deem to have been most shamelessly ill-used."

With this Lord Erskine bowed and resumed his seat, while a deathlike silence fell upon all present.

Frank Farley felt that he had gone too far, and yet he had taken up a position he could not consistently withdraw from without defending it.

So he said:

"You doubtless are acquainted with the facts, Lord Erskine, and I only hope matters are not so bad as they seem, for Noel Stanwood was very dear to me, before I knew him as he really was, not as he appeared; but you, as a king's officer, certainly cannot defend the act of a mutineer."

"Did I do such a thing, sir, I would be recreant to my duty; but to what mutiny do you refer?"

"The striking of a superior officer upon the quarter-deck, breaking his sword and then killing him."

"Who did this, sir?"

"Noel Stanwood."

"From whom did you get your information, may I ask?"

"Do you pretend to deny it, my lord?"

"I pretend nothing, sir, but I say that it is false as the friendship some people have for those they pretend to serve and befriend."

"It is utterly false, sir."

"These are bold words, my lord, when men of high rank say to the contrary."

"No man of higher rank than I hold knows aught about it, sir, for the only one who ranked me, sir, who was present, is now at the bottom of the sea."

"I refer to Lieutenant Sir Bradwyn Brule."

"But he fell by the hand of Mutineer Stanwood, you will not deny this, my lord?"

"Permit me, sir, to instruct you upon an affair you were wholly ignorant of."

"Mr. Stanwood carried a vessel from here out to South America, and after delivering her there was wounded and robbed by a band of Dagos."

"He took passage in a vessel for home, but it was captured by pirates, and to save his life he acted as a seaman on board."

"A pirate, eh?"

"From necessity, sir; but he was ill, and saw the brig Shark come into the retreat of the buccaneers for water, while Captain Crimson, who had gone out after his escape, as a seaman on the Shark, had escaped, and joining his outlaw comrades arranged a plot to capture his old vessel, which you may remember Stanwood had taken from him."

"Though ill, Stanwood swam out in a bay infested with sharks, and a distance of over a mile, reached the brig and under his warning and plan we beat off the buccaneers."

"Captain Kane offered him the berth of boatswain, urging him to help him out, as he was short-handed, and he took it for the time being."

"Sir Bradwyn Brule was senior luff, and he at once began to persecute Stanwood in many petty ways, for reasons I care not to mention."

"One day when becalmed a few leagues out from Callao when I was officer of the deck, Sir Bradwyn brought up his desk and taking a miniature from it began to comment upon the lady whose likeness it was, and, knowing that she was a friend of Stanwood, who stood near, insultingly handed the miniature to him."

"Sir Bradwyn was my friend, my lord—"

"And mine, too, sir, until I found him unworthy of further friendship," was the cool reply, and it made a sensation; but all turned to Lord Erskine to continue his story, and he resumed as follows:

"What Sir Bradwyn intended should be, happened, for he got the lie direct from Stanwood, and with a cry of fury drew his sword and sprung forward to run him through."

"In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases to the thousand he would have succeeded; but Stanwood quickly drew his jack-knife, parried the thrust, and seizing the sword wrenched it from Brule's hands, broke it, and tossed the pieces into the sea."

"And that is not mutiny, Lord Erskine?"

"No, Merchant Farley, for as a favor Mr. Stanwood was acting as boatswain, Brule was not on duty, gave no order, and taunted the sailor to do what he did, for the purpose of killing him."

"By Heaven, sir, but you make bold charges against Sir Bradwyn Brule, a king's officer."

"I am a king's officer myself, Mr. Farley, and I wish to say that I never utter a word I am not ready to hold myself responsible for—only a coward will, and before I finish my narrative, I will make still more serious charges, feeling that if I offend the friends of Sir Bradwyn Brule, they should remember how he sought to destroy my friend, Mr. Noel Stanwood."

"I, as officer on watch, at once put Mr. Stanwood in irons, and when off duty reported to Captain Kane what Sir Bradwyn had already reported."

"Captain Kane ordered Mr. Stanwood out of irons, said that he was his guest, only nominally an officer, and so placed Sir Bradwyn in a position where he had to resent the blow of Stanwood as gentleman to gentleman."

"Mr. Stanwood went ashore upon arriving at Callao, and Lieutenant Caldwell followed him with a challenge from Brule to fight him."

"I acted as Stanwood's second, and we met late that afternoon, and Sir Bradwyn and Lieutenant Caldwell came in a boat from Admiral Tate's frigate, accompanied by my friend here, Lieutenant Bonair, Midshipman Lumley, Surgeon Deas, a coxswain and four oarsmen, all of whom witnessed the duel."

"Mr. Stanwood selected swords, and though you have all heard of Brule as a master swordsman and a deadly duelist, he was most cleverly disarmed and given his life."

"Instead of acting as a man of honor should, Sir Bradwyn insulted the man who had saved him from the pirates, and just then given him his life, and demanded a second meeting with pistols."

"Then I saw that Stanwood meant to kill him, and he shot him in the center of his forehead."

"Stanwood, by order of Commodore Tate, who is present, was arrested, sent on board of the brig and put in irons, my friend here, Lieutenant Bonair, arresting him."

"The brig sailed, and going into the pirates' haunt to see if any were there, found not a soul until a goleta sailed out of a lagoon upon us."

"By action and sickness our crew had been decreased greatly, and we saw a foe coming upon us five to one."

"We held off and fought them until our bowsprit was shot away and the brig came to."

"Captain Kane was badly wounded on deck, Lieutenant Caldwell had been carried below, and I, with three wounds, was in command."

"I gave up all for lost, and we meant to die then and there, when suddenly on deck

came Stanwood, followed by his marine guard, half a dozen of the not seriously ill sailors, and as many slightly wounded, all of whom he had rallied to his aid and armed.

"He supposed the brig had surrendered, and he gave orders that were quickly obeyed, and more, fairly made a charnel house of the *goleta*, beating her off, until he got the brig under way, rigged a bowsprit, and then drove the pirates back into the lagoon.

"A midshipman was then the senior officer, and Stanwood sent the surgeon to work, cleared the decks, buried the dead, made the wounded comfortable, and when the brig was under way again turned the vessel over to Midshipman Willis and returned to his irons.

"The captain ordered him set free, but he refused, and the crew, not knowing that he had willingly gone into imprisonment again, went in a body to Midshipman Willis and demanded his release, and, but for the fact that Stanwood sent for the leaders and told them that he would not accept his freedom there would have been serious trouble.

"Long after, when the brig was rounding Cape Horn, and a tornado caught us, Midshipman Willis and Captain Kane, knowing that the ship was in terrible danger, besought Stanwood to take command and keep it until he brought her into Boston.

"He went on deck, and just in time, for again he saved the brig.

"I was put on board the Pelican and brought here, and the brig, under Stanwood is now due, and I have to say that I have told the facts of the case, and for prejudice and malice to try and crush that noble man, Noel Stanwood, will be infamous and unworthy of true manhood."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MERCHANT FARLEY OVERSHOTS THE MARK.
THERE was that about Lord Erskine that always commanded respect.

His superior officers even had always spoken to him as though he held higher rank than they.

Then too his family was one of the most prominent in England, and his father was near the king, his influence being felt and known.

Added to these reasons for his popularity and influence, Lord Erskine was a handsome, dashing fellow, always courteous and his riches were unbounded it was said.

And so it was that all at the supper had listened to his report of the affair on the brig with the deepest interest.

They had heard before that Lord Erskine had reported that the rumors going about were bitterly false regarding Noel Stanwood, but now they heard him personally nail them as falsehoods and in public, while Lieutenant Bonair, who was also known as a man the soul of honor, had been an eye-witness of the duel, and that Sir Bradwyn had forced the affair until he rushed upon his death.

The supper was not a private affair, nor by invitation, but the caterer of the club was wont to set an extra entertainment once a week and those who happened to be in the house that evening were asked to sit down and enjoy it, and often there were many glad to do so.

Now as Lord Erskine finished his recital, flinging down the gauntlet as it were, for any one who doubted his story of the Stanwood-Brule affair, a dead silence fell upon all.

Sir Bradwyn Brule had his friends there, but his shortcomings, violent temper and boastful talk of his duels were known, while he was greatly dreaded as a duelist by all, and avoided by many.

It had leaked out that Sir Bradwyn had been disappointed in his love affairs, and went to sea "with a chip on his shoulder," so to speak.

If any one present had decided to take up the gauntlet for Sir Bradwyn, the fact that Lord Erskine Enders would be the man they had to face deterred them.

Prince Paul Revere seemed silent and thoughtful over the affair, but a merry twinkle came into his dark eyes when Lord Erskine would give Frank Farley the opportunity to resent his words.

Pearl had told him of meeting Lord Erskine, and of the story he told of Noel Stanwood, and he felt sure that the nobleman was more than anxious to have Farley resent

his words, for the merchant was considered a "fire-eater," and was known to constantly practice with sword and pistols.

In fact, Merchant Farley flattered himself with the idea that he was a man much feared, and it was assumed that he had had a number of affairs in which his adversary always came out second best.

The lovers of trouble who were present, were now certain of a quarrel, and anxiously awaited the result.

To the surprise of all, Commodore Tate arose in his seat, and, amid a perfect silence, asked:

"Lieutenant Enders, for I address you officially now, sir, may I ask you as a gentleman and an officer of the Royal Navy, if your statement just made regarding Sailor Noel Stanwood is just as you would put it under oath before a court-martial?"

"Word for word, Commodore Tate, upon my honor, sir."

"And Lieutenant Bonair, your memory of the affair, as far as you were concerned, would it differ under oath from the report of Lieutenant Enders?"

"Not one jot nor tittle, sir."

"Gentlemen, I thank you for putting me right, for I was all wrong, I see."

"I am a stickler for discipline, from forecastle to quarter-deck, afloat and ashore, and I was in too ill-humor when the duel occurred to listen to the report which Lord Erskine and Lieutenant Bonair desired to then make, nor would I let Captain Kane explain.

"My gout got the better of my temper, and an angry man has no judgment.

"I was wrong, all wrong, and when the brig-of-war arrives, I will not press the charges against Mr. Stanwood, who deserves our praise, not our censure, it seems."

A round of applause greeted the admiral's words, and then the naval advocate, who sat next to Frank Farley, arose and said:

"Pardon, Commodore Tate, but as the papers charging Stanwood with mutiny and murder were turned over to me for prosecution, upon the arrival of your vessel, to be proved when the prisoner arrives in the brig, I must say that no one now has authority to dismiss the case, and the mutineer and murderer must be tried as ordered."

"Your pardon, sir, but after my story of the affair, kindly say the *alleged mutineer and murderer*," and Lord Erskine spoke in a tone that showed that he was in earnest.

The advocate turned to him, and having said:

"I accept the amendment, sir, the *alleged mutineer and murderer*."

There was now a feeling of discomfort falling upon the party, for a storm seemed brewing, and no one knew just when or where it would break.

Commodore Tate had made the *amende honorable*, and when the advocate said what he did, simply replied:

"So be it, sir, if he must be tried; but the facts will quickly disprove the charges, I am confident, after what I have heard."

"If other charges of a serious nature do not disapprove the *alleged facts*," said a voice that startled all, for it was a direct fling at Lord Erskine and Lieutenant Bonair.

The speaker was Frank Farley, and all eyes were turned upon Lord Erskine.

He was equal to the occasion, for with a smile and bow he said, pleasantly:

"Mr. Farley, you did me the honor of calling upon me a few days since, at my hotel.

"Pray be at home to-morrow morning, for I shall have a friend drop in to return that call for me."

"Nothing could be more elegantly put," said Commodore Tate to Prince Paul Revere, who was upon his right.

"No, and Farley has made a grave mistake," was the answer.

This fact Frank Farley seemed to realize, for his face changed color.

He had wished to get the credit of bullying, without drawing Lord Erskine into a quarrel.

But his words had been better understood by all present than perhaps by himself, and the looks that followed them showed that he had dove deeper than he had intended.

As the insult came from him, he could not fail to understand Lord Erskine's elegantly phrased challenge, and so could only bow,

and some one skillfully changed the subject from its dangerous channel, and wit, repartee and laughter again resounded around the board.

It was late when Paul Revere returned home, but he found Pearl seated before a blazing fire in the library awaiting him, and engaged in some fancy work with her needle.

"Just from the club, papa?" she asked.

"Yes, my child; but you are up late, for it is near midnight."

"I wanted to know if there was any news of the brig, sir."

"No, but there was a pretty scene at the Social Club to-night called up by reference to the brig."

"Ah, tell me of it please, papa."

"Lord Erskine called here this afternoon, he told me."

"Yes, sir, and I had the pleasure of entertaining him, in your absence, and he is a most charming man."

"He is, indeed, and I admire him immensely."

"He comes of an old and most prominent family and his title dates back for centuries, while he is, I believe, the richest man in England."

"All good recommendations, papa, for a catch, but you know I am already caught."

A frown passed over Prince Paul's face at this, but he went on to tell of the supper at the club, and of Lord Erskine's defense of Noel Stanwood, with the response of Commodore Tate, after which he said:

"If that fool Farley had known the *real* meaning of words, Pearl, he never would have said what he did.

"He hoped to frighten Erskine off, but he chose the last man to play that game on, to alarm, or insult."

"Enders was ready for a quarrel with Farley, I could see from the first; but his way of taking up the gauntlet which Farley threw down, was the handsomest I ever saw," and Prince Paul repeated Lord Erskine's words.

"This means a duel?"

"Yes, Pearl."

"I am sorry."

"Well, I am not; Farley has been carrying a very high hand of late, and he met more than his match in Lord Erskine."

"He has tried to browbeat Ethel Stanwood into marrying him, and he has hoped to get her brother out of the way to force her to do so; but now that Lord Erskine has taken up the gauntlet for Stanwood, it will be interesting to watch the result, and I predict that Farley will find that he has made a grave mistake."

"A young fool is bad enough, but God pity an old one," and Paul Revere bade Pearl good-night and retired to his own room.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE AMERICAN FLAG.

HAD Sir Bradwyn Brule been upon the brig-of-war Shark, in her cruise after rounding Cape Horn, not even he could have found fault with the merchant captain of the king's vessel.

Noel Stanwood kept to his old quarters, where he had so long been in irons, and the chains hung there still, as though he did not fear to see them.

He was courteous to all, attentive to the care of the wounded, from cabin to forecastle, but he was very silent, and, it seemed, almost stern at times.

He did double duty, not sparing himself in anything, and the middies stood in awe of him, in spite of kindly treatment of them.

If there was a neglect of duty on the part of any of them, they were reminded of it in a manner that advised against a repetition of the offense.

If any of the men became troublesome, and there were several unruly spirits among the crew, they were at once handled without gloves.

Though not of the Royal Navy, Stanwood allowed no interference, attending to his duties in all things as he deemed best.

After placing Lord Erskine on board of the sloop-of-war Pelican, the brig sailed on her way to execute the other orders given Captain Kane by Commodore Tate.

Several times she had been compelled to fly from a foe far too strong for her, but twice had gone into action with every show

of strength, and had captured a French brig-of-war, forcing her to strike with her guns alone, for she dared not show her diminished crew, and a small French privateer schooner had also been overhauled and taken.

With the crews in irons, and a couple of midshipmen on board of each, having just men enough under them to work the vessels, the prizes kept company with the Shark on her way northward.

These two captures but added to the fame of the American officer, for he had taken vessels whose crews in each instance doubled his own, depending upon the fleet sailing of the brig, and the well-trained gunners, which enabled him to keep his own distance and force his enemy to surrender with his guns.

So it was with his prizes the young sailor started northward, and on that day Lieutenant Caldwell was able to come on deck.

He was greeted pleasantly by Stanwood, congratulated upon his recovery, and an easy chair was placed for him, but not a word did Stanwood say about relinquishing the command.

At last, in a querulous mood, Caspar Caldwell made a suggestion which he said must be carried out.

It was done, by order of Stanwood.

Then an order from the British lieutenant followed, and instantly Stanwood turned toward him with the remark:

"Pardon me, Lieutenant Caldwell, but I command this vessel until relieved by Captain Kane, for I acknowledge no other authority on board."

Lieutenant Caldwell at once arose and sought the cabin, where he said somewhat warmly:

"Captain Kane, after my visit to you I went on deck, and seeing something that I deemed should be attended to, I gave an order to have it done, and that fellow Stanwood gave me to understand that he was in command of this vessel."

"And so he is, sir, and more, I heard through yonder open skylight just what occurred."

"At first Captain Stanwood yielded to you, and then resented your order as he had a right to do."

"He has just gone on watch, so anything wrong was the fault of Midshipman Dorsey who was before him."

"As to speaking of Captain Stanwood as a *fellow*, if you do such a thing again, or treat him with the slightest disrespect, I shall take it as an affront to myself, and prefer charges accordingly."

"Captain Stanwood consults me in all things, and he represents me until we drop anchor in Boston Bay."

"Then I am to understand that I am to have no authority here, sir?"

"When you report for duty you are to do so as acting first officer, Midshipman Willis dropping back to second place."

"This is hard indeed, for a merchant sailor to rank a king's officer."

"It was not hard when he has three times saved this ship, and if I, the commander, put up with it, then my officers shall do so, or refuse, just as they deem best."

"What is your decision, sir?"

"I shall obey your orders."

"And Captain Stanwood's?"

"Yes, sir, as he represents you," and it was very evident that Lieutenant Caldwell yielded with a very bad grace.

But a midshipman who was looking over some papers for Captain Kane in the cabin, heard all, and reporting it to his mates, all decided that for their own good they must treat the "sailor captain," as they called Stanwood, with the same respect that they did their own commander, or they saw trouble ahead for the middies of the Shark.

The next morning broke foggy and calm, and the brig and her prizes could not see each other, though they were not far apart.

As the fog lifted a large schooner was descried a mile away, and the coming breeze lifting her colors, the flag of the American Republic was recognized, or, as Lieutenant Caldwell, who was on deck, put it:

"She flies the flag of the Rebel Republic!"

"Now for another prize, for she is hemmed in by the brig and her two prizes."

All was at once excitement on the deck, for the stranger had gotten, during the dark-

ness and fog, into the triangle formed by the brig and her two prizes.

The two brigs were equal in size to the American schooner, and the prize schooner a trifle smaller, so resistance seemed out of the question, as the stranger could not know that the crews of the trio of vessels combined, that were flying the English flag, did not number half a hundred.

All eyes turned upon Noel Stanwood, who quietly took his glass and leveled it upon the stranger, who was hastily spreading all sail, as though to attempt to run the gantlet, and the drums were heard calling her crew to quarters.

But not a shadow was upon the face of the young captain, as he closed his glass with the remark:

"Yes, she flies the American flag."

"Then she will be another prize for us—see! the brig and our schooner also, are preparing for action," cried Lieutenant Caldwell.

"Signal them at once, sir, not to act without orders."

"My God! do you not intend to capture her?"

"I do not, sir."

"We can do it, for she does not know our weakness of crew."

"I shall fire no gun upon her, sir."

"And yet she flies the rebel American flag."

"True, sir, and I am an American myself, a *rebel* if so you will."

There was no hiding the excitement these words produced among those who heard them, and when Lieutenant Caldwell could catch his breath he said:

"I shall report this, sir, to Captain Kane."

"Do so, sir; but let me tell you that I took command of this vessel to save her from destruction, and I did so."

"I was asked to take her on her cruise to carry out the orders of her captain, and I have so far done so."

"In her weakened condition, crippled and short of crew, she was not expected to go into action, but to fly from a foe."

"As Great Britain is at war with France, I decided to risk the capture of two of that country's armed vessels, and they are now our prizes."

"Now we are on the way to Boston and come upon an American privateer, which I feel sure we could capture, she not knowing our weakness."

"But she flies the flag of my countrymen, and I will not turn gun upon her, while, as captain of this vessel, receiving the largest amount of prize money, I relinquish it for those two prizes I have, to be divided among the officers and crew of the Shark for the loss of yonder American schooner."

"I can do no more, nor will I, but I wish to say just here, Lieutenant Caldwell, that I overheard your muttered words but now, to Midshipman Dorsey, and if you, by act, look or word give me another cause to do so, I will put you in double irons until we reach port."

"Go to your duty, sir!"

The eyes of the American fairly blazed, but his manner was perfectly calm, a calmness which Caspar Caldwell understood, for he saluted in silence and walked away, while the group that had gathered were glad to slink away.

The American captain would stand no nonsense, that was certain, and all on board the brig now understood it.

As for Captain Kane, he said, when Caldwell reported it to him:

"What Stanwood does he must take the responsibility for, as I will report his action, of course."

In the mean time the American schooner held on her way, gaining speed under her increased sail, her men at their guns, the flag of the new Republic flying at her peak, and her course laid so as to escape through the trap she had found herself in, if she could do so, while, if not, to simply surrender against such odds.

But no shot came from the trio of vessels flying the British flag, and they held on their way seemingly unconscious of the existence of the American.

And the schooner with the new flag passed on out of danger in dread silence, not a gun having been fired by any of the four, to the

utmost chagrin of the British crews, and the intense amazement of the Americans, who could not of course understand why three vessels flying the flag of the Royal Navy, would allow an enemy to escape them.

But the commander of the American schooner wisely let well enough alone, and did not attempt to spring the trap by opening fire, but sailed on her way out of sight.

That afternoon a blow sprung up, and in the darkness of the night that followed, the brig and her two prizes parted company; but they still all three held on their course for Boston Bay.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE THREE ARRIVALS.

THE prize French brig under Midshipman Burt Willis, was the first to arrive in the harbor of Boston, having caught a gale that was favorable to her course.

The midshipman had sunk his first bitterness against Noel Stanwood, so rendered his report of the prizes taken, giving it as his opinion that very few men would have taken the chances that Captain Stanwood did to attempt the capture of the prizes.

In regard to the affair of the American cruiser met with, he reported it simply as follows:

"On the morning of the 13th ultimo, which came with a calm and fog, we sighted a large schooner which soon showed, as the wind rose and fog disappeared, the American flag.

"Captain Stanwood doubtless had the best of reasons for attempting no attack upon the vessel, so wisely forbore making any, and the rebel craft escaped us."

The next vessel to arrive in port was the French schooner, also a prize of the brig, and under command of Midshipman Wendell.

The middy, proud of his achievement of reaching port, after becoming separated from the two brigs, at once rendered his report, in a way that reflected great credit upon Midshipman Commander Horace Wendell, of his Majesty's Navy.

Partaking of the feeling of Lieutenant Casper Caldwell against Noel Stanwood, he could not tolerate an American who had become a hero over the heads of British officers, and also had a fair chance of gaining a king's commission instead of a noose, as had been expected, and, by some, hoped would be the case.

So he made his report of the American cruiser affair as follows:

"On the morning of the 14th we were in a calm and a fog, and found, upon the breaking away of the mist from a rising wind, that we formed a triangle, the brig Shark being the furthest away.

"Within this triangle was a large armed schooner, not half a mile from either of the two prizes, and less than a mile from the Shark.

"We, Midshipman Willis of the prize brig, and myself, at once made preparations to take a prize so valuable, but to my amazement and chagrin, signals came from the Shark, commanded by Mr. Noel Stanwood, an American of the merchant service, to fire no guns at the enemy.

"I could but obey, and, to my surprise and regret, beheld the rebel quietly slip out of the trap and disappear, while the face of every true British sailor was flushed with shame and anger.

"Mr. Stanwood may be able to explain his actions, but it will be hard to do, for the rebel schooner was completely at our mercy."

This report, with that of Burt Willis, midshipman commander of the French brig Vidette, went into the hands of the commander of his Majesty's sea forces at Boston, and but increased the bitter feeling of British officers for the upstart American whom, they all considered, luck or accident, or both, with the misfortune of others, had placed in his exalted position over a British war-vessel, thus enabling him to continue on in his successful career.

With the arrival of the two prizes great anxiety began to be felt for the brig, which was such a fleet sailer.

She was known to be very short-handed, with Stanwood as captain, Caldwell and one midshipman as lieutenants, and not twenty men for duty, and it was feared that she had

fallen in with some foe who had captured her.

But at last a sail was reported, far to the eastward by north of Boston Light, and as it drew nearer it was seen to be a brig.

Then it was discovered to be the Shark, and she swept on up the harbor, her flag flying at half-mast, her hull weather-stained, rigging and sails patched, and only a few men visible upon her decks.

In the little cedar grove in front of the cottage of Widow Stanwood were four persons watching the coming brig.

They were Lord Erskine and Pearl Revere, both in riding attire, and their horses were hitched near, and the other two were Mrs. Stanwood and Ethel.

After a long look through the glass Lord Erskine said emphatically:

"It is the brig, and I'll meet her when she arrives and return for you, Miss Revere."

"I will be glad if you will do so, Lord Erskine, for you see three most anxious females awaiting to hear the news," replied Pearl.

"Yes, my lord, you can but feel how my heart bleeds to hear of my son and what is to be done with him," Mrs. Stanwood responded, while Ethel said softly:

"Don't let them send him to prison if it can be helped."

"I will do all in my power for your brave, gallant brother, Miss Ethel," and throwing himself into his saddle Lord Erskine dashed away with the air of a man who had been reared in the saddle instead of upon the deck of a vessel.

It was growing twilight when he reached the shore, and a boat was coming ashore to report the arrival of the brig.

In it was Lieutenant Caldwell in full uniform, and as he stepped ashore he was greeted with a kindly welcome by Lord Erskine.

"I am really glad to see you so well, my lad, for I was fearful about your recovery," said Caldwell.

"And all are well on the brig?"

"The captain is still confined to his cabin, and we have about as many of the crew below decks, wounded and sick, as we have on duty; but have a brig and schooner, both prizes, arrived?"

"Yes, in safety."

"Good! that means a handsome sum in prize-money; but I must go and make my report, and I fear it is going very hard with your American friend, Stanwood."

"How so, sir?"

"Well, you know the old charges too well to rehearse them, my lad, and he has been guilty of a most heinous crime while coming here, for he allowed a rebel cruiser to escape, and openly proclaimed himself a rebel."

"Pardon me, Lieutenant Caspar Caldwell, but you are on duty, and are speaking of your superior officer, Captain Stanwood."

"If you have charges to make, wait until the proper time, and, meantime, remember that if Captain Kane is unable to take command of the brig, that *I am her commander*, for I have reported for duty upon her arrival."

Caspar Caldwell saw that he had gone too far, and so leaving in silence went on his way, while Lord Erskine stepped into his boat and was rowed out to the brig.

Captain Stanwood welcomed him with much pleasure, and led him to the cabin, where Captain Kane greeted him heartily, and said:

"I wish you would come off to-night, my lord, and take command, for I am unable to do so, and Caldwell has shown an intensely ugly disposition against Stanwood, who has, however, held his own against all odds."

"He is a remarkable man, and will make a record for himself some day, if those old graybeards do not insist upon hanging him, for he will have another severe charge to fight."

"You refer to the rebel cruiser affair?"

"Yes, but he could claim that he was in no condition to attempt her capture, with not men enough to man two guns on each ship."

"But he will not?"

"No, he boldly said that he yielded his share of prize-money for the two captures he made, and refused to attempt to take the rebel cruiser, because he was an Ameri-

can, and his sympathies were with his countrymen."

"He is a bold man; but public opinion was changing here in his favor, though I do not now know how it will tend, since his declaration of war against the British, for such it was.

"I fear it will make trouble for him, where otherwise it would have been plain sailing to acquit him, for Commodore Tate surrendered, after he got cool enough to listen to the facts in the case."

"Well, go and get your uniform and return for duty as soon as possible, so I may feel easy."

Lord Erskine left the cabin, and going on deck had a talk of some minutes with the young sailor, whom now he admired amazingly and felt the deepest sympathy for.

"If you acted from a sense of right, Stanwood, I cannot blame you; but I am sorry you did not do as Captain Kane told you, take French leave, for I fear there is trouble ahead for you.

"I will return and report to your mother and sister, and Miss Revere, that you will remain aboard to-night, and we will see what can be done on the morrow.

"I will come off as soon as possible to take command, for Caldwell is your foe."

"And you are a noble friend, Lord Erskine," was the earnest reply.

Lord Erskine returned rapidly through the gathering gloom, and had not the heart to make other than a hopeful report to the anxious mother, sister and lady-love of the young sailor.

Then he escorted Pearl home, and an hour after reported on board the brig for duty.

He found Captain Caldwell in command, along with several other officers who had been sent off to do duty on the brig.

But when he asked for Noel Stanwood, Captain Kane told him that he had been arrested and sent ashore in irons, and added:

"This is Caldwell's work, I am sure."

Lord Erskine's face flushed with anger, and sending for Lieutenant Caldwell he said sternly:

"Lieutenant Caldwell, I have to say, sir, that I relieve you from command of this brig."

"Have you orders for so doing, sir?"

"I have my orders here, to take the brig, fit her out and go on a special cruise in her in search of the mystery of the sea known as the Silver Ship."

"I do not usurp Captain Kane's place, for he is to command the frigate British King, Commodore Tate having been made an admiral, while I have the honor of showing you my commission as a captain in the Royal Navy."

"Having thus shown you my authority, Lieutenant Caspar Caldwell, let me say to you, sir, in the presence of Commander Kane, that your conduct toward Captain Noel Stanwood has been as despicable as was that of Sir Bradwyn Brule, and if harm befalls that young sailor, through your reports exaggerated tenfold against him, I shall waive our respective ranks and hold you personally responsible. You can go on deck to your duties, sir, and if you care to resign from this vessel your resignation will be accepted with thanks."

Caspar Caldwell was completely dumbfounded.

He had hoped for his own promotion, and yet not a word had been said to him by the admiral when he made his report, that hinted that he was to be made a senior lieutenant.

Yet here, upon his arrival Captain Kane was promoted to commodore, and Lord Erskine, a junior lieutenant was jumped up to a captaincy and given the most coveted command that could be had, that of the vessel that was to be dispatched upon a special cruise after the Silver Ship.

He felt that he had allowed his malice to carry him too far, and when he tried to recall one act which Stanwood had been guilty of against him, he could not do so.

His conscience also pricked him with the thought that he had been unkind, unjustly so.

He was not rich, and he loved money, and here was the brig going upon an expedition, which if successful would enrich every officer and man on board.

Yet he had been politely informed by the

new captain, that his resignation would be accepted "with thanks."

Bitterly he cursed his unfortunate disposition, and his ill-fortune, in persecuting Noel Stanwood, and determined to make a bold effort to regain favor, he sought Captain Erskine and said:

"I am afraid, my lord, that I was a little malicious toward Stanwood; but then he was not one of us, either in country or training; but whatever I can say for him in his trial, I will gladly do, and I should esteem it an honor, my lord, to be allowed to go with you on your cruise, holding the same rank I now do."

"Lieutenant Caldwell, at the trial of Captain Stanwood, it is your duty to say nothing your honor does not uphold."

"Tell the truth, from your standpoint only, and no more can be asked."

"As for your sailing with me, the desire for which prompts your change toward Captain Stanwood, I can say that a vacancy exists for an officer of your rank, and, as I know you to be a brave and efficient officer, I will place your name upon the list of those the vacancy will be filled from."

"I thank you, my lord, I thank you," and the sycophantic officer bowed low and left the cabin, while Commodore Kane said with a laugh:

"The Silver Ship, and your threat to hold him responsible, caught him, and after your promise to him just now he will be the warmest friend Stanwood has."

"Yes, but God help such friendship."

"Still he is an excellent officer and just fills a certain gap in a ship's complement; but how on earth he is to reconcile his past actions toward Stanwood, with what he will now doubtless testify to, I am at loss to understand."

"But it takes all kinds of people to make up a world, commodore."

"You are right," was the laughing rejoinder of the gallant old sailor, who was tickled amazingly over his promotion to the command of the frigate British King, an honor he had not expected, and which he had an idea, and a just one, was owing to the influence of Lord Erskine Enders that he got it.

CHAPTER XL.

GETTING RID OF A WITNESS.

THE good people of Boston, and their British rulers were almost wild with excitement, the day after the arrival of the brig Shark.

There were many reasons for this excitement, for provisions were getting scarce in the town, and Washington was drawing his lines closer and closer around the city.

The patriots were no longer despised by the British, and both on land and sea, from Massachusetts to the Carolinas, the king's people had received some severe lessons.

American cruisers had begun to dot the seas, and in action the British bull-dogs had discovered that their Yankee cruisers were a trifle more than a match for them.

The "freedom call" was echoing through the land, and Americans were facing the ordeal of a long and cruel war with no flinching from the struggle.

The Americans in Boston were delighted, and the American traitors and British rulers correspondingly oppressed.

Another cause of excitement was the coming of the brig-of-war Shark, with one-fifth of her crew, an American sailor in command, her captain wounded in his cabin, and a report that the temporary commander had declared himself a *rebel*, and had refused to capture a valuable prize in the shape of an American cruiser.

That this daring traitor, Noel Stanwood, once a child of fortune and beloved in Boston, would be hanged was a foregone conclusion in the minds of many.

Then there was still another theme for excitement, as the returned brig had been at once taken to the dock, dismantled, and had a hundred workmen put upon her to get her into the very best trim for sea at once, to go in search of the famous Silver Ship, Wind Witch.

Thousands who went down to see the famous brig, once the pirate schooner of

Captain Crimson, then the craft which had passed through such an eventful cruise, looked upon her and her crew as doomed.

"She would never return from a cruise in chase of a phantom ship, and God help her foolhardy commander and crew," was the standing verdict rendered by all.

But Boston also had still other cause for excitement, for a duel had been fought on the evening after the arrival of the brig.

Two boats had been seen going in the early dawn down the harbor.

One had pulled away from the end of Long Wharf, and it contained four oarsmen, a coxswain and three forms muffled up in heavy cloaks, for the November wind was cold and piercing.

The other boat had left the side of the brig Shark, and contained four oarsmen, a coxswain and two cloaked forms.

Both boats headed for Apple Island, and the cloaked forms landed there, and sought shelter from the cool wind behind a clump of stunted pines.

It was just dawn, and after a few low-spoken words two men, with their cloaks thrown aside, faced each other, with rapier in hand.

A sharp contest followed, and one of the combatants sunk to the ground, while the other coolly wiped the blade which he had driven into the body of his adversary, and walked toward his boat.

Two hours after the news spread over the town that Lord Erskine Enders had killed Merchant Frank Farley in a duel, on Apple Island; but when sought for the naval officer was found superintending the getting of the brig into the dock, and when asked about the affair by Commodore Kane, merely said:

"It is a mistake, I did not kill him, for I did not care to do that; but I gave him a lesson that may be useful to him."

"At any rate he will not appear at the trial to-morrow of Noel Stanwood, as he had not only planned to do, but had arranged to bring a number of false charges against him," and Lord Erskine smiled, as Commodore Kane remarked:

"You tried a new plan, Enders, to get rid of a witness against our friend."

"Exactly so, and one whose willingness to perjure himself would have done a great deal of harm to Stanwood."

"Had Farley been willing to fight Stanwood fairly I would have said nothing; but as I learned just what he meant to do, I decided it best to keep him away from the trial."

"But will they not take his testimony?"

"Oh, no, for though he is not dangerously wounded, he thinks so, and his surgeon is Stanwood's friend, and reports that a word to his patient may sever the thread of life."

"Oh, no, neither Farley or his false evidence will be on hand at the trial," and Lord Erskine smiled serenely.

CHAPTER XLI.

CONCLUSION.

THAT Noel Stanwood needed all that could be done in his favor, was proven by his trial, for he was brought before a tribunal prejudiced against him. First, because he was an American, second, as such he had done that which no king's officer had done, third, that he had deliberately declared himself a rebel and as such had refused to capture an American vessel though actually in his power.

Then it was decided that he was, though acting boatswain, really entitled to no release from punishment for having given the lie to a king's officer, broken his sword and struck him, after which he had killed him, even though it was in a duel.

Under all these charges, and for reasons named, he was found guilty, while his saving the brig from the pirates, and capturing two prizes being taken into consideration, he was recommended for mercy, and so was not hanged, his sentence instead being imprisonment for life.

Noel Stanwood heard his sentence unmoved, and went back to his prison cell ashore to await final incarceration for life in an English prison, where he was to be taken.

Some days after a dispatch ship arrived

from England and brought news of the death of Lord Erskine's father, the Earl of Enders, and demanding his presence at home.

So he was forced to resign the command of the brig, to go in search of the Silver Ship, and as his first officer was suddenly ill, the command devolved upon Lieutenant Caldwell, greatly to the regret of Lord Erskine.

Then it was decided to send the brig first to England with dispatches, and Lord Erskine was to go as a passenger, while Noel Stanwood was to be sent in double-irons in her to his English prison.

And after sad farewells, between the prisoner, his mother, sister and Paul Revere, the brig, wholly refitted and with a splendid armament and crew shipped expressly for her, set sail out of Boston Harbor and shaped her course for England.

Lieutenant Commander Caspar Caldwell was in his glory, and could not help an occasional triumphant glance at Lord Erskine, who had no longer authority on board, while he rejoiced that his old enemy, as he really regarded Stanwood, was below decks in double-irons.

Three months passed after the sailing of the brig, and there came a dispatch ship into Boston, upon the eve of the evacuation of the town by Lord Howe, the British commander.

This ship brought dispatches to the effect that a mutiny had occurred on the brig while crossing the ocean, Lieutenant-Commander Caldwell and the other officers had been made prisoners, but released on parole to the freedom of the vessel, while Captain Noel Stanwood had been placed in command, the British ensign hauled down and the American flag raised in its stead.

Then with her new captain and his officers selected from the crew, the brig had headed for England, landed Lord Erskine and the officers at a certain secluded point on the channel coast, and afterward gone on her way as an American privateer.

The news was startling to many, but a cause of joy to a few, and it was predicted by all that Noel Stanwood would make a name for himself as a "rebel captain."

Nor were they disappointed in this prophecy, for Noel Stanwood won undying fame, and the fact that through him was solved the mystery of the sea, the Silver Ship, added to his honors, for he picked up a boat at sea one day containing several dead bodies.

In the hand of one was tightly clasped a paper on which was written:

"This boat is the last relic of the Wind Witch, known as the Silver Ship."

"The Silver Ship reached the treasure isle, but when the treasure was to be taken we found there a wizard and a witch who put upon us a fearful curse—to cruise the seas without a haven, until our ship went down, to answer no hail, to hail no craft, to fire no gun."

"That night a fearful tidal wave swept over the island, drowning the wizard and the witch, and our havenless brig was driven upon it far away."

"Since that day we have cruised under that fearful curse, until now our vessel is sinking, and we take to the boat, the remnant of her crew."

Men breathed freer after the knowledge that the mystery of the sea was solved, and British and Americans devoted themselves to the war in which they were engaged.

When peace at last came, two notable events occurred in Boston, in the double marriage of Miss Ethel Stanwood to Lord Erskine Enders, and Miss Pearl Revere to Captain Noel Stanwood, of the Navy of the United States of America.

And one day Lord Erskine made known to his beautiful wife that he had been in the secret, that the brig's crew were really Americans, and had shipped to seize the vessel, release Noel Stanwood, and place him in command of the fleet craft, which was to hoist the flag of a Sea Scout of 'Seventy-six.

THE END.

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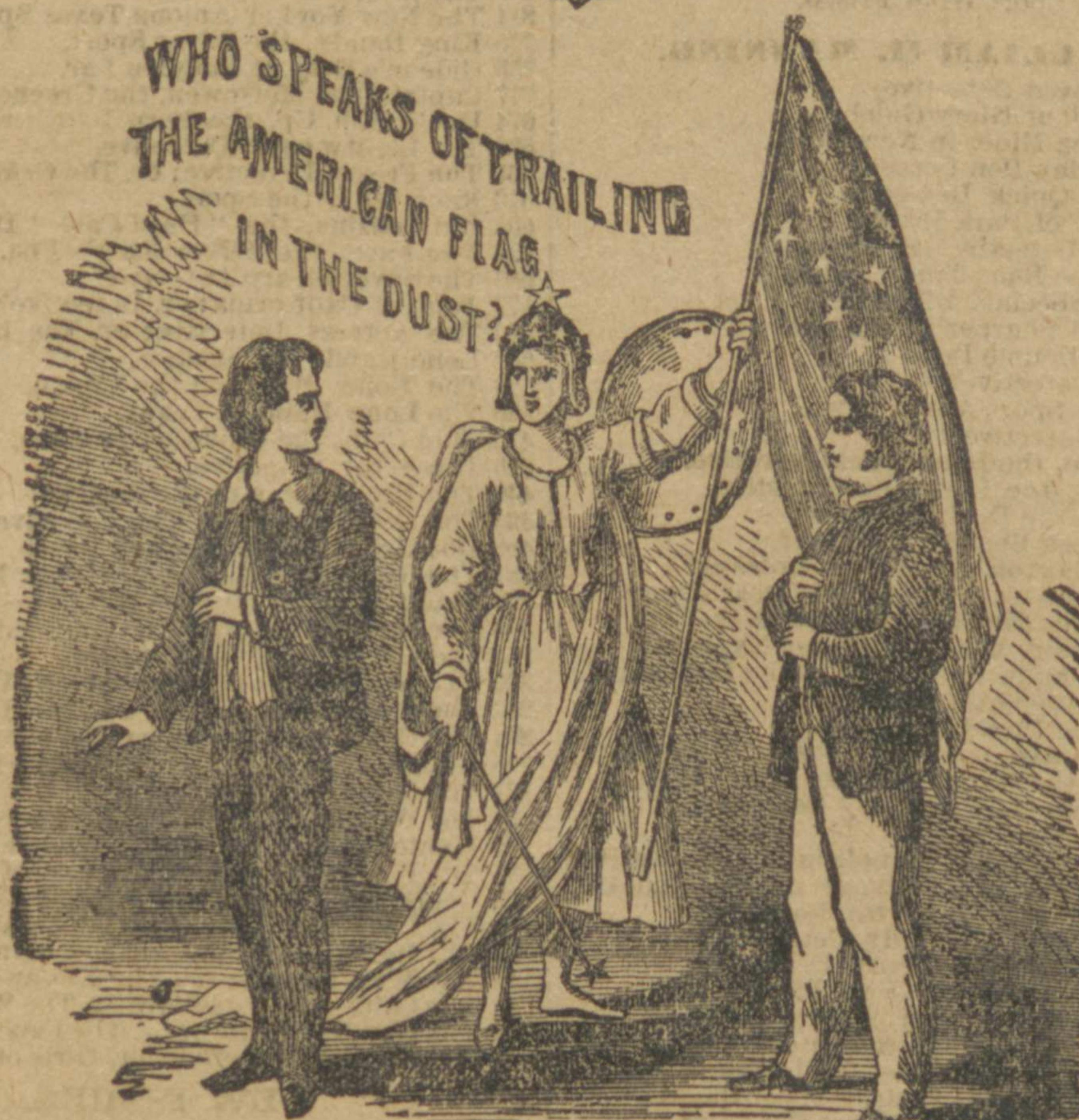
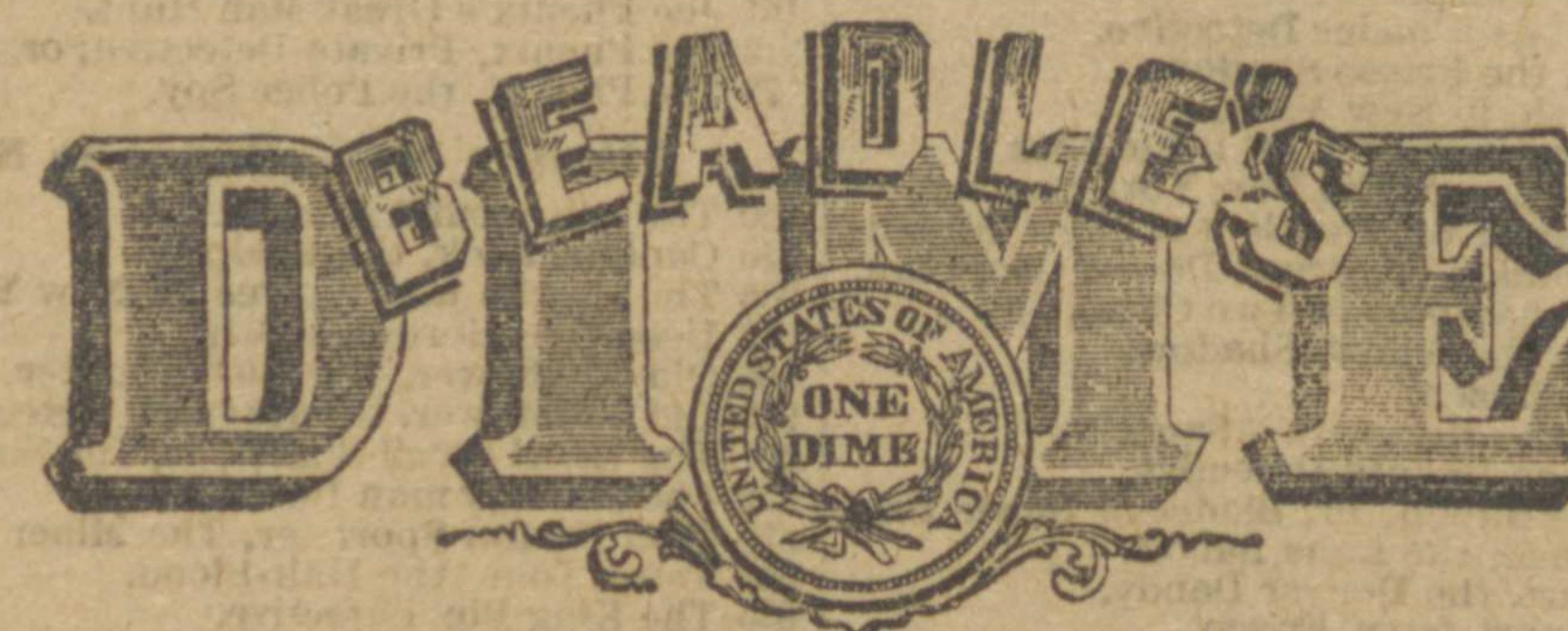
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